

A woman with her arms crossed and head tilted back, surrounded by falling autumn leaves and petals. The background is a sunset with rays of light. A large tree is on the left side.

Viola Grace

Earth and  
Ayr

Sol has been trying to force information from the giants on the Raven's Rest station above Jotunheim. No one can tell her where her friend Jin is until Morgarn the mountain giant walks into the bar. He knows where Jin is and is willing to tell Sol, but he trades information for kisses. Using the element of air to torture him, she finds that using air against rock is not an effective means of extracting information.

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**EARTH AND AYR  
ELYMYNTYLS BOOK 2**

**BY**

**VIOLA GRACE**

## INTRODUCTION

In book one, *Liquid Heat*, the water elemental, Djihntalia Bosun, was attacked by a fire giant on the Raven's Rest space station. He was trying to collect a bounty laid on the three Terran descendants who run the station bar, *Elymyntyl*. She is rescued by another fire giant, Ragnar, and he offers her protective custody until they are sure she is safe.

All goes well until he also offers her hospitality and her mind trips into the type of Hospitality sharing that first intimately united her parents, Terran Myka Michaels and D'hai Bosun of the Dremarai.

Ragnar is the fire elemental who starts a blaze in Jin's heart and body, too bad when they collide, the result could be nothing but steam...

Solial Kennan was born to a Terran scorcher and a man with a heady mix of Dhemon and Nyal blood. She embodies air and is always ready to defend her property and her people. With her partner Jin off the station and her other partner Fen doing the books, Sol is left with the front of the house and watching over the mechanical bartender who is pinch hitting for Jin.

Everything is fine until two fire giants walk into the bar...and the third one ducks. Thanks to Julie for the joke.

## CHAPTER ONE

Solial Kennan usually enjoyed her shift, but something was not right tonight. Her best friend had been assaulted on the station and was in the protective custody of a fire giant, leaving her in the front of *Elymyntyl* with only the servers and an android bartender for company.

There were more giants on the station than ever before and since the smallest of them came in at six and a half feet tall, their business was far more crowded than the headcount would account for. She had spent the first few days interrogating any and all of them, but the giants knew nothing of Jin's whereabouts.

Concentrating on her work, Sol made sure that the air blew through the establishment, but the crowd from Jotunheim, the planet below, gave a certain aura to the bar that they didn't really need. She used her talent to circulate air and every now and then, she lightly suffocated one of the more pugnacious patrons before he could do damage.

Whoops, trouble brewing. She glided over to

the table where a lot of table pounding was turning into shoulder smacking, a sure sign of trouble in the giants. "Take your friend outside."

"We aren't causing any trouble."

"No, but you will. Get out of my establishment, or I will put you out." She smiled politely.

They guffawed, so she gathered the wind and pushed them out. Most of the regulars got out of the way, but a few of the newer patrons were swept out in the tornado that she brought into the bar.

She was tired. She tapped her earpiece. "Fen, we need to close. I can't do this tonight."

"Close up, I am on my way down."

With a flick of a switch, she turned on the lights and the system requested that everyone leave the establishment. In five minutes, the room was empty and Sol was alone. Fen came down a moment after Sol took up one of the barstools and was staring into space.

Fen sat beside her and put her arm around her. "I know it isn't the same, but she is safe, or we would have heard something by now."

Sol snivelled. "I miss her. I didn't think I would, but I do. I suppose I am too much of a control freak. I want my loved ones where I can get at them."

Her brown hair fell down in a curtain around her face as she leaned forward to rest her head on

her hands. "This is depressing."

"It will be fine. If there is one thing my family knows, destiny is a fickle bitch. Don't fight her or you might end up worse off than when you started." Fen gave her another short squeeze and a peck on the cheek.

"I think I need some time off."

"Think a week will do?" Fen had her head cocked and was smiling at her friend of many years.

"Should be about right. Thosnas has a lot to answer for. We will post it tomorrow and then close for the next week."

"You are not going to confront him, Sol. Putting yourself into his hands is dangerous. We don't know what is going on and until we can get an update from Jin, we are flying blind."

"You are right, but I still don't understand why she called you and not me."

"Despite your talent, you are a bit of a hot head. She didn't want you charging off to the rescue, so she simply kept you from knowing where she was."

Sol scowled. Fen was right and she hated that the fire elemental was calmer than the air was. Solial usually loved jumping into bar fights, but only when her friends were there to cheer her on.

"Are you getting the escort to the bank tonight?" The switch of topic was almost



guaranteed to distract Fen.

"I am. A new one. He's on the way, guaranteed to be safe by the establishment of the orbital station."

"What is he...Nyal...Azon?"

Fen shook her head. "One of the giants of Jotunheim. Very even tempered and he can't be bribed. His name is Morgarn and he comes highly recommended."

Sol was instantly suspicious. "Recommended by whom?"

"The Gaia Group. I asked them for a reliable guard and assistant and they sent me to Morgarn. Apparently, he knows everyone and is very personable."

A knock sounded on the main door. "That must be him. Answer it, would you? I need to tally what we did take this evening."

Sol got to her feet, straightened her tunic and walked over to the door. A dark shadow was on the other side of the misted plexi and she gathered a storm in her hands as she keyed open the door.

He was seven feet tall if he was an inch and had a face that looked hewn from granite. He reminded Sol of pictures of gargoyles from her mother's Terra. He looked down to her face and his voice sounded like a gravel landslide. "I am looking for Fen. My name is Morgarn."

She swallowed and was glad that he seemed to

be on her side. "This way."

She waved him inside and locked the door behind him.

"You seem careful."

"We have had a few attacks on our receipts. No sense being stupid." She watched him move and was astonished at the grace of his stride. He may look like rock, but he moved like a dancer.

She stared at him so hard, she could almost feel her eyes bleed red with her Nyal heritage. It was pathetic that she was ogling him and she felt embarrassed to have started a flare of her heat at the sight of him. Normally, her body was more circumspect.

Sol quickly shook her head and straightened to follow him into the depths of the bar. Of the men for her to be attracted to suddenly, why couldn't it have been the nice Azon doctor who recently arrived on the station?

"You should stop staring at my ass, Miss Solial. You might bump into something." His deep voice rumbled through the open air and Fen had the gall to smile while she tallied the credit slips.

She didn't even try and protest, "How long until you are ready to go, Fen?"

"Just finishing up. We didn't have an active day. Lock up the exotics and we can go."

Sol wandered over to the bar and pressed the safety that lowered the more expensive and exotic

liquors into a safe storage area. They hit the lever whenever a fight was offing. It wasn't often, merely a precaution.

She felt a peculiar sensation on her back when she bent over to secure the locks. She turned her head and Morgarn was ogling her ass in return. He didn't look away when she caught him, merely smiled, letting a heat come to his eyes.

"Okay, I am ready. And I think you are, too. Stop staring at my partner and do your job, Morgarn." Fen slapped the stone man lightly on the shoulder and they were off.

Giants from Jotunheim were waiting at every corner, but with Morgarn leading the way, no one dared to intercept them.

Fen made the deposit in the station's secure system and as a unit, they walked her back to her quarters.

"Wait here. I will check that we are the only ones here." Morgarn quickly scanned her rooms and allowed Fen to kick them out.

"Call me as soon as you are home, Sol. I worry." Fen gave her a hug and Sol returned it.

"I know you worry. Me, I like action."

Morgarn raised an eyebrow and his grin was just on this side of sleazy. "So do I. We have so much in common."

"Take it outside, folks. Sol, call me." Fen shoved them out the door and they stood staring at each

other in the hall.

“My rooms are on level seven.”

Morgarn nodded and placed a warm hand on her back, “I will keep you safe, Solial, no matter what.”

The wording was a little peculiar, but she didn't dwell on it. His hand had her skin humming happily and he was going through two layers of clothing. If he ever touched bare skin, she would probably fly apart.

It was a good thing that he was hired help for a few days and nothing more. She usually had fairly rigorous self-control when it came to men, but her senses were whirling and she hadn't even known him for an hour.

It must be the stress of the situation, the bounty on their heads placed by the mysterious Thosnas, the disappearance of Jin into the world below them and the lack of communication from her friend and partner. Sol needed to rest in the worst way.

Two fire giants attempted to block their path. “Give us the elemental and no one gets injured.”

“I have been hired for security and I always keep my word.” Morgarn didn't even step forward, simply waited for them to come to him.

With a smooth move, he placed her behind him and put his body between her and the fire giants. Fire bloomed on the walls to either side of her and

she quickly leached it of air to stop the burning.

Morgarn was still blocking their approach, but she could tell that they were getting closer. She couldn't see anything around the giant's sides, so she did what she could—up and over. A jet of air propelled her so she could see over Morgarn, a blast of hurricane winds put the fires out and the fire giants fell to their knees.

“Well done, Solial.”

His insistence on using her formal name made her smile, but it was so hard for her to move air on a space station that she dropped to the floor in a tangle as soon as she cut the power. Her giant simply picked her up and carried her off to the lifts.

The fire giants on the floor groaned as they passed, but they didn't have enough fuel to start a burn.

She fought the urge to snuggle into his embrace. Instead, she kept alert and held her hands together between her knees. Sol gave him terse directions to her quarters and she palmed the lock with only a little effort.

“Solial, what is wrong? Were you injured?”

“No. It is hard to move air on a station. It tires me out.”

“I have seen you use your talents in the bar. It doesn't seem to affect you in there.”

“We have fans going constantly. It makes it

easier for me to work my talent if the air is moving.”

He nodded at the logic and carried her into her bedroom. She was so heavy, she lay where he dropped her. “Will you be all right if I leave?”

“Sure, I will simply sleep it off. I trust you to lock up when you leave.” She rolled over onto her side and pulled the pillow under her chin.

He hesitated, then gave her a short nod. He closed the bedroom door behind him and she sighed. It was a pity that he was a giant. She might have enjoyed using her wiles on him.

*Such a pity.*

## CHAPTER TWO

**S**ol grimaced at the wreck of her tunic. Sleeping in it had wadded it high against her waist and she quickly got to her feet and stripped. Her shower was dry, but it was welcome and woke her the rest of the way.

She pattered around her room selecting clothes and brushing her hair. She hit the button to make her bed, dropped her clothing on it and wandered into her living area with an eye toward catching up on the news.

Sol was not expecting the mountain giant who was sitting on her couch, his hair tousled and his eyes sleepy. "Whoa."

His gaze snapped to her and widened as he took her in. "Good morning, Solial. I thought it best to stay with you after I called Fehniel to let her know you were fine if somewhat tired. You look...refreshed."

She cursed in all the languages she knew and raced back into her bedroom, placing her back against the door. Her skin was hot. A blush

covered her lightly tanned skin from top to toe.

Sol jumped when a knock sounded on her door. "You may want to come out of there eventually."

He sounded amused again and she closed her eyes in mortification. "Give me a minute to get dressed."

He didn't make a sound, but she could tell he had moved away from the door. With a sigh of relief, she pulled on some tights and a long tunic slit up the sides to mid-thigh. A belt and boots up past her knees completed her outfit. Her father would approve, all skin covered.

She glared at the door for a solid minute before she got up the nerve to exit. "Why are you here?"

"I could not leave you in your incapacitated condition." He looked slightly disappointed that she was clothed again. "I am contracted for security after all."

"I wasn't incapacitated. I was tired and I went to sleep."

"I am still interested in keeping you safe." He put his feet up on the coffee table and she used a blast of air to knock them off.

She scowled at him as she punched up a meal on the dispenser. Her manners got to her after a moment, "Can I offer you anything?"

"Yes, but you covered it up."

It took her a few seconds to catch on, but then her blush was back full force. "Food-wise."



“Whatever you are having times four, please.”

She should have known. With a quick flick of her hand, she increased the order and started delivering the food to the coffee table in a rapid relay.

Beverages were next and she didn’t offer him a choice. He was having the same morning tea that her father prepared for group meals when she was home. It was her personal program and she enjoyed it as a routine start to her day.

While Morgarn sat on the couch, she took a cushion and pulled it near the table. With a nod to her guest, she started eating.

When she finished, she started clearing the empty plates and trays. She sat and sipped her tea slowly until he was done. The sweet-tart blend slipped down her throat with calm familiarity.

He admired it as well. “What is this?”

“My father’s recipe—a combination of Dhemon citric tea and Nyal smoke blend. He said it epitomized his biology. My mom asked him to cut down on the smoke, because she got enough of it at work.”

He sipped and closed his eyes with pleasure. Sol couldn’t help but watch the gleaming drop of tea on his cleanly cut lower lip. When his tongue darted out to catch it, she bit her lip and took a deep breath.

“What does your mother do?”

“She’s a Scorcher. We spent months travelling with her, going from plague world to plague world waiting for her to destroy the bodies of the dead that were left after the disease ran its course or was stopped. A burn was the only way to cleanse the area to keep the bacteria and viruses from reasserting themselves.”

Morgarn was surprised. “You spent time on plague worlds?”

She shrugged. “Under full quarantine, the main benefit to my talent is that I could always create a negative airflow for the habitat. The one time there was a breach, I was able to keep the air flowing outward until a seal could be fixed with no loss to the workers inside.”

“What does your father do?”

Sol laughed—a clear genuine laugh. “Whatever my mother tells him to do. He acts as her security detachment, just like my grandpa does for my grandmother.”

“So, the men in your family have the women walking all over them?”

She snorted. “They are well compensated for the trouble.”

His facial features changed to a considering pose. “I suppose they were.”

The silence that fell was a little uncomfortable. “I need to call my parents. They tend to worry if I go too long without contact.”

“I will meet you at *Elymyntyl* later. Thank you for breakfast.”

She grinned. “You’re welcome. See you later.”

Sol escorted him to the door and when he leaned down to give her an experimental kiss, she froze on the spot. His lips were cool, smooth and tasted of her tea. He didn’t deepen the kiss and she sighed lightly when he pulled away.

“Later, Solial. Be there by four, or I will come and get you.”

The door closed in her face as he exited the room. It felt empty now that he was no longer inside taking up all that space.

She shrugged and went to her private com to check for messages. A flash of light and a trickle of hope ran through her. Sol opened the message to hear, *Sol, it’s Jin. I am fine, but Thosnas is matchmaking. Crap, I have to go.*

The message ended and a thrill of hope ran through Sol. Jin was fine. She breathed deeply for the first time in days.

The matchmaking portion of the message didn’t make sense. Her partner must be confused, but at least she was all right.

With a lighter heart, she called her mother.

After two hours of fielding questions on her personal life, she was able to worm out of the conversation by telling Sarah and Athon that she

was needed at the bar. Their persistence was more aggressive than normal, but Sol shrugged it off as being part and parcel of her increasing age.

They wanted grandkids, damn it, and they weren't shy about giving the ultimatum to all four of their children and as their eldest, Solial got the brunt of it.

She pinned up her hair, the long locks got a little freaky if she didn't pin it or braid it.

She powered up before leaving her quarters. It was a trick her mother had taught her to keep her power just beneath the skin in case of emergency.

The route to *Elymyntyl* was usually unmolested, but with the bounty on her head, she took nothing for granted. Fire giants were easy to blow away, relatively. They were dependent on the fuel provided by oxygen. Take the oxygen away and they were just big bullies.

Stealth was not her style, so she just walked with all the courage she could muster. It took her ten minutes and by the time she sealed the doors of the bar behind her, she was shaking with tension.

"Rough walk, Solial?" Morgarn was waiting for her, manning the bar and taking inventory.

"It always is. What are you doing?"

"Preparing for the evening's festivities. Since this is your last night open for a week, I felt it might be nice for you to have a friendly face

behind the bar. The android is nice, but my ass is better." His wink was pure mischief and she laughed.

"Fine. Put in the earpiece and call me if you need me."

He didn't laugh and she found that endearing. His calling for her help was highly unlikely, but he put in the earpiece and continued fussing with the bar.

When the doors opened, giants flooded in, took one look at Morgarn and settled down. Sol was amazed, but still resolved to shut down for a week. Jin was alive and she was down on Jotunheim. Sol had a private shuttle and an urge to find her friend.

She used her mic. "Morgarn?"

"Yes, Solial."

"Do any of these fire giants know where Jin is?"

"Ask me after closing. I am a little busy right now."

Patience was not her virtue. She scowled and nodded, then realised he couldn't see her gesture. "Yes, I will."

Hours passed slowly for Sol. She paced, twitched and even the pounding music couldn't distract her. None of the other giants gave her any trouble, which filled her with a bubbling frustration that almost spilled over by completion

of last call.

Just as they were beginning the herding of their clients to the door, a frost giant entered the picture. He and Morgarn shared a long look before he took a seat at the bar. Morgarn poured him a glass and they stood talking quietly while Sol moved the crowd out.

A chill flowed through the room, speeding the exodus. With Morgarn entertaining the last entry, Sol was free to lock up and send out the cleaning bots.

Fen came into the room and looked curiously at the men engaged in deep conversation. She crossed to Sol and asked, "Who is tall, dark and frosty over there?"

The tone of interest in her voice was unmistakable. Sol fought a grin. It didn't surprise her that Fen's fire would be interested in the control of ice.

If only Sol didn't find herself between a rock and a hard place, she would have been more enthusiastic. "Okay, boys, introductions and then everybody out. Except you Morgarn, I have questions for you."

Fen smirked and sidled up to the frost giant. "Come on. We obviously are not wanted. Since Sol is depriving me of my bodyguard, you will have to do." She grabbed the stranger by his arm and hauled him away to her office.

## CHAPTER THREE

Morgarn laughed. "He let her lead him away like a pet on a leash."

"Fen has that effect on men, women, too, if she has a mind to, something to do with pheromones." Sol shrugged.

He gave her a long look, his dark eyes sparkling. "You had some questions for me?"

"Not out here. There are too many surveillance cameras." Sol jerked her head toward the rear supply room.

"Lead the way." He came around the bar and followed her to the back room.

Her palm opened the lock and she led him inside.

The moment the door closed behind him, she used a blast of air to shove him into the chair she had set up earlier and she kept a vortex in his lap to keep him down. "Now, mountain giant, tell me where Jin is."

He blinked from his seat, surprise evident on

his features. "You are willing to get me mad in order to find out what you want to know?"

"Of course, she's my friend and I want her back alive and well. You, I am rather indifferent to." That was a lie, but one she was going to stick to.

"You needn't resort to something that will injure you, Solial. I will tell you what I have learned." He didn't move a muscle.

She wavered.

"Sit down before you fall down."

"You are in the only chair in the room."

He sighed and pulled her into his lap, completely ignoring the hurricane force winds that should have held him down.

"Now, Solial, there are some ground rules to this sort of thing. For every piece of information I give you, I get a kiss."

She was too surprised to give much of a fight.

He settled her firmly against him and wrapped his arms around her waist. "Do you agree, Solial? One question. One kiss."

Sol looked up into his face and considered. She did want to kiss him, but did she want to trade it for information? What the hell.

"Fine. Where she is and who she is with?"

"That's two questions. One at a time."

Sol sighed and crossed her arms over her breasts. "Fine. Where is she?"

"On Jotunheim. My kiss, please."



She waited until a blush started in her cheeks.

He was waiting for her.

Grumbling, she unlaced her arms and reached out for Morgarn. She pulled herself up to him, because he wasn't coming to her.

She pressed her lips to his, but when he didn't react, she mentally called herself nine types of stupid while slowly licking at his lower lip. It was like kissing stone for the first few seconds and then his lips parted and she felt the rush of air from his lungs. The bulge of his sex under her thigh grew even harder as she worked her mouth against his.

Before she could give in to the rising pounding of her pulse, Sol pulled back.

Morgarn groaned and leaned his head back, his chest was rising and falling as fast as hers was.

"Who is she with?"

He closed his eyes for a moment and then opened them, glittering with the same heat that was riding her. "She is with her mate."

"What's his name?"

"Ah ah. One question, one answer."

Sol moved in his grip, straddling him on her knees. She pressed her lips against his in a bruising kiss, holding his hair and rubbing against him. Gasping, she pulled away and when he tried to follow her, she held him back.

She whispered against his cheek. "What is his

name?"

"Ragnar of the eldjotnar."

"Why did he take her?"

He didn't answer, merely crooked an eyebrow.

She gripped his ears and took him in a savage mating that used her tongue to taste the minty sweetness of his mouth, the surprising sharpness of his teeth and the cool, hard flex of his skin. If the rest of his body felt this good, she was in for a lot of trouble.

She backed off with a gasp, her nipples hard and her womanhood hot and pulsing. "One more." She dove back in to the kiss, rocking her hips against him and her moans blended with his.

She forgot to break the liplock and he did it for her. He leaned back, "She was his destined bride, the one the seer saw."

Sol backed up in surprise. "I am not going to ask any more questions tonight. I want to keep my clothes on."

His leather shirt was showing wear from the clawing of her nails, his chiselled lips were swollen and slick and she really wanted another taste. She licked her lips and leaned an inch forward before she caught herself.

"I can take you to your friend."

That was an offer that surprised her.

"Only if we leave now. Tonight. Or this morning rather."

“Fine, let me grab a few things and we can go.”

The pleasure in his eyes was unmistakable. “Excellent. I will take you to your quarters after I order a shuttle.”

“I don’t think I need an escort.”

“The price is still on your head. I want you safe.” A surprising tenderness came to his eyes as he stroked a curl of hair from her cheek.

“Fair enough. Now help me get down.” She smiled and patted his cheek.

Grinning, he placed his hands on either side of her hips and lifted her off his thighs. He rose and she straightened her legs, leaning against him until she could stand upright again.

She turned and led the way out of the storage room, no trace of Fen or the frost giant remained.

They walked through the halls together, whatever the watching giants saw was enough to make them turn and walk the other way. Morgarn waited outside while she gathered an overnight bag and checked her messages. Fen left a cryptic, “I have a line on Jin’s whereabouts. I will talk to you soon.”

Solial felt a surge of irritation. It was just like Fen to keep her out of the loop until she couldn’t participate. The others were always trying to keep the air elemental safe. They never listened to Sol when she told them that she didn’t need to be protected from her own temper.

She held onto her bag when they entered the shuttle bay where his vehicle was docked. The dock master had it fuelled and ready within half an hour.

When Morgarn led her to his shuttle, she could sense his pride. The doorways were large, wide and all the accoutrements were scaled for him. She perched in his navigator station like a five-year-old. Her feet didn't even touch the floor.

"Harness, please."

She obediently wrapped the harness and fastened it. He reached over and took her left hand in his. A brief kiss to her knuckles and they were on their way, the patchwork of Jotunheim opening up under them.

It was a strange-looking world – chunks of land that had no business together were rammed next to each other. Fiery wastelands were next to verdant plains, lush forests banked wild mountains.

She had to ask. "Where are we going?"

"My home. From there, I will make some calls and find out exactly where your friend is. That's one."

"One what?"

"One kiss for one question. I am keeping track." His lips twitched as he set the shuttle for entry into the atmosphere.

"You aren't serious?"

“That’s three.”

The shuttle rocked and shuddered as it went through the thermal layers.

Sol smoothed the layers as best she could and the ship stabilized into a smooth descent.

“That’s handy.” Morgarn steered easily through the cloud layer until he brought the shuttle down in a green space surrounded by forest.

“Is this it?”

“Four. Yes, it is.”

She closed her mouth in surprise, pressing her lips tightly together. No more questions were going to pass through her lips.

Morgarn was grinning, a relaxed attitude to his limbs that wasn’t there on the station. He had moved with grace, sure, but there was an underlying tension that was now completely gone.

With a smooth motion of his hands, he unclipped her harness and helped her out of her chair. “Come with me, Solial.”

“Why don’t you call me Sol? Damn it!” She slapped her hand over her mouth.

“Five. Because my family doesn’t believe in familiarity until marriage.” He had a grin on his face she wanted to smack off. He was enjoying this.

“Excellent.”

He chortled when she didn’t continue her questions. “You learn quickly. Come along. We

can have a meal and you can rest.”

She nodded and followed him to the door of the shuttle. The atmospheric protocols completed and she took her first steps on a new world in years. Air, fresh, moving air wrapped around her and lifted her off her feet. She lifted above the tree line and viewed the surrounding mountains. Almost close enough to touch.

Morgarn shouted in shock. “You can fly?”

She giggled and swirled around him quickly before landing to follow him into a door in a tree. “That’s one.”

He scowled, but it wasn’t a serious scowl. They entered a tree wider than the shuttle and Sol walked down a slowing hall into an underground village of giants.

A huge vaulted cavern under the mountain was lit as bright as the daylight outside. She wanted to ask how the light was generated, but she was already into him for five kisses and based on the heat of the last ones, clothing would probably not survive past the second one.

“You mentioned making a few calls to find Jin.” She carefully didn’t phrase it as a question.

“I did. The main communication centre is in my home. This way.” He led her toward a stable and a man emerged with two large goat-like creatures with saddles and reins.

“Oh no.”

“Oh yes. Travelling on beast is the only way to make it to my home by dark.”

“Lord Morgarn, two beasts, as requested. Nice to see you back, by the way. Is this your bride?” The stable master grinned.

Sol stiffened and glared at the giant next to her. Morgarn chuckled and clapped the man on his shoulder. “Time will tell. Not all seers are accurate.”

He gestured for her to boost herself onto the beast and she tried, she really did. Finally, she sighed, “Would you help me?”

“Six. And yes.” He wrapped his hands around her waist and boosted her five feet into the air to the saddle. The stable master adjusted the stirrups for her while Morgarn settled on his own giant goat.

He grabbed the reins of her beast and they were off. Villagers waved hello as they passed while she used airflow to keep herself in the saddle. It was not the most comfortable way to travel.

It took over two hours of riding across rocks and up hills in the cavern before they reached the longhouse that Morgarn designated as his home.

A stable to one side of the house yielded a young man who came out to care for the beasts.

“Surn, take good care of these two.”

“Yes, my lord. I am glad you are home. Is this your bride?” The young giant with grey marble

skin and a shock of blond hair grinned at her.

"I am no one's bride." She kicked her leg free of the stirrups and used air to lift her gently to the ground.

Morgarn took her hand and led her into the longhouse. He shouted over his shoulder, "Not yet."

The dim interior smelled of freshly cut wood and beeswax polish. Tables and benches marched back into the rock face that the house was built against.

"The com unit is this way...in my private quarters."

Her hand was firmly in his grasp and she nodded politely to the sturdy middle-aged giantesses as they passed. They looked up in surprise and one shouted the question that she was coming to dread. "Is that your bride?"

He chuckled and hauled her along.

"Don't you charge them for questions?"

They arrived in his bedchamber and he closed the door, leaning against it and pulling her to him. "That was seven."



## CHAPTER FOUR

Morgarn lifted her high in his arms and she glared at him, “This is the first instalment, but I need you to make that call.”

She grabbed his ears and pulled his head to hers in a kiss that had her legs flailing for purchase. She wrapped her thighs around his waist and used the leverage to work herself against him. When he groaned, she smiled and broke the kiss.

“Make that call.”

He shook his head and walked over to the com unit, wearing her like a clinging vine. Morgarn pried her away and sat down at the com. Sol staggered a few steps before steadying herself on the carved bedpost.

The call went through and he spoke rapidly in one of the dialects of Jotunheim. A voice on the other end answered harshly. The two masculine tones ran back and forth for several minutes until they came to an agreement.

Morgarn nodded and disconnected the call.

"Well, what did he say? Where is she?"

He turned slowly on the chair and looked at her for an endless moment. "That's eight and nine."

She shivered at the look in his eyes. "Wait, that is just kisses, nothing else."

"Unless you will it." Morgarn casually removed his leather tunic, exposing his massive chest and kicked off his boots.

"What are you doing?"

"Getting more comfortable. Your friend is at a nearby fire-giant residence. She is being punished for watering her mate while he was engaged in arm wrestling with her brothers."

"Is that all he said?"

"Ten. You just don't know when to quit. He asked if I had taken you into protective custody and if you had tried to kick my ass yet. Ragnar remembers you as...feisty."

As he spoke, he settled down on the bed with his back against the headboard. He gestured for her to approach. "I am disinclined to wait for my payment. Now."

She could try to run, but instead, she stole the air from three feet surrounding him.

He waited patiently, his fingers drumming a beat on his chest. He didn't pass out. Didn't faint. Didn't even twitch.

"What the hell?"

He rushed at her, lifting her from the floor and pinning her against the sheets. "Were you trying to suffocate me? Solial, you can't suffocate rock."

A vague horror ran through her as she realized that she didn't hold the card she thought she did. Her one avenue of defence was gone.

"I believe that that was the second question that I owed you. Here is my payment for the first."

He licked at her lips while she squirmed under him. The sensation of his chest across hers pebbled her nipples while he deepened the kiss. The constraining fabric of her tunic became an irritant as she wove her hands through his hair to hold his mouth to hers. His taste was intoxicating and she didn't want to lose it.

She felt a tug on her clothing and heard a tearing noise, but she was too busy seeking more of him to pay much attention. When his chest brushed against her breasts, she moaned. It felt wonderful.

When he moved over her and the leather of his trousers pressed between her thighs, she groaned as she rocked against him, seeking more contact against her clit. She felt her eyes flare red as she started a rhythm with her hips that brought her closer and closer to satisfaction.

She was so close to climax, her body was shaking with tension and Morgarn pulled away.

His skin was darkened with the flush of arousal

and he was breathing heavily. The mountain giant lay back on the bedding, his erection pressing against the now-tight leather with harsh insistence.

Sol followed him, climbing out of her shredded tunic and crawling on top of him. Giving in to her urges was the easiest course of action and much more fun than fighting them. "Ten."

She straddled him and used one hand to free his cock while the other cupped his jaw for contact. He groaned when her hand made it through the ties and his cock sprang into her hand, hot, smooth and hard.

Her teeth grazed his lips and she drew back. "Down to nine now."

His voice was husky. "Keep going."

A tiny trill of power ran through her. Sol twined her arms around his neck, rocking her hips against him, her tights now the only impediment to having him inside her. The kiss sent her blood roaring through her veins, his hands running in endless strokes down her back pressed her breasts against his chest and she squirmed on top of him.

She smiled against his lips as he pulled her tights off her. She savaged him as her bare skin was completely exposed to his. She released his mouth and worked her way down his neck, "Eight."

His collarbone, "Seven." First his left and then

his right nipple, "Six and five."

He shuddered as she trailed her tongue down his abdomen, flicking into his navel, "Four."

She curled her hand around his pulsing length and exhaled against the flared head of his cock, smiling as he arched into the heat of her breath. "Three."

Opening wide, she took him between her lips, pulling back and sucking, then licking her way forward. She moved on him, faster and harder until he was shaking and jerking with each move. She pulled away with a smile. "And that leaves two."

He snarled and rolled her under him, finding her wet slit and pressing two fingers inside.

It was a tight fit. Sol cried out as he curled his fingers slightly and worked them against the front wall of her sex.

He pushed her legs back and stroked ruthlessly as she cried out with each pressure inside her. Her g-spot had always been a myth as far as she was concerned. Morgarn's clever fingers were proving her wrong.

Her orgasm surged through her in sharp, hot spasms and still his fingers continued to work inside her. Sol finally mewled and tried to escape the hard sensations, beating against him with her hands and air. Tears flowed as her body finally wound down and ceased to spasm.

He released her bent legs from their confinement against her chest and moved between her thighs.

She moaned as he thrust shallowly into her, working his length and width carefully into her body until he was fully imbedded. His body was supported on his elbows and his dark gaze met hers as he started to move. Sol could read the pleasure in his eyes and the sweat that rapidly dampened his back where her hands stroked and held him.

He stroked and retreated steadily, rocking her with every thrust. She could feel the wide head of his cock claiming the space inside her with each push and pull. His motions increased in speed until they were rocking together and once again, Sol felt the spiral of sensual tension within her. This time, when she shattered into incoherent cries, he followed her into pleasure with groans of his own.

He slumped onto her, his face buried in the pillow beside her head. She pressed a kiss to his jaw with a smile, and a last one on his lips. Her voice was breathy when she said, "And that is all of them."

He raised his head and looked at her in astonishment before he started chuckling.

The laughter made the appendage inside her slip and slide enough to make Sol intake her

breath sharply. He slid from her and she squirmed at the feeling of their mingled juices trickling out.

"I am sure you have more questions, Solial. I stand by, ready and willing to answer them." He rolled to the side and turned her to face him. He stroked her shoulder, waist and hip in a slow and dedicated pattern.

"You tore my clothing."

"There are clothes for you to wear in that chest over there. Gowns that will make you blend in with the locals while you are here."

"I brought clothing with me."

"The style of clothing that you have is not precisely fashionable by Jotunheim standards. I want you to feel like you fit in while we travel."

"Travel?" She cursed under her breath as she caught his grin. "That's one."

"Very good. Yes, we are going to make our way across the mountains in one of the few skimmers on the surface. We will meet with Ragnar and your Jin, confirming that she is alive and well and here of her own free will."

"You are very agreeable right now."

His smile was filled with masculine satisfaction. "I have reason to be. It is not every day that an air elemental falls into my bed."

She raised her fist and brought it toward his face. She winced as he caught it in a firm grip and laughed as he bore her to her back once again.

“Look, you just fell again. Very clumsy, Solial.” When he leaned close, he whispered against her neck, “I believe I owe you two kisses...wherever shall I put them?”

She laughed. “That’s three.” Her next comment was lost on a gasp as he worked his way down her body and she listened to the debate he had with himself as he chose the perfect spot.

For the first time in her life, she was interested in the outcome of a debate. What was the world coming to?



## CHAPTER FIVE

**A**ppropriate clothing for the mountain giants consisted of a set of flowing trousers in soft leather that tied at either hip and a tunic with open sleeves, the bodice of which wrapped and tied under her breasts. Soft boots covered her feet and she was quite pleased with the outfit.

Morgarn smiled as she twisted and twirled in front of the mirror. "You like it?"

"Back to two." She grinned. "Yes. It will stay on me if I take to the sky. I wear trousers or tights to keep from flashing the populace."

The mirror was on the back of the bathroom door. Her wet hair was braided tightly down her back and gave her face a severe look.

"We will be travelling to Ragnar's realm shortly. I have one stop to make before we head that way."

He was wearing the same sort of leather shirt and trousers that he had on when she first saw him on the station. The charcoal grey made his

skin gleam and the dark flare of his eyes sparkle.

It wasn't fair that she found him prettier than she was.

"The skimmer is outside to the right of the great hall. Feel free to walk around outside while I speak to the housekeeper and have a word with the blacksmith."

He opened the door to his bedchamber and waved her out into the great hall.

The middle-aged women were still fussing in the kitchen and waved pleasantly to her as she passed. In light of the fact that they had probably heard the interaction between Morgarn and herself, she was a little shy. With her focus on the door, she did not hear whatever the mountain giant said behind her.

Daylight flooded her eyes and she blinked rapidly. She had been to a few planets with villages and agriculture, but usually with her mother and the inhabitants had been dead. To see a living situation where animals ran through well-tended fields was almost surreal.

Sol stood for a moment, enjoying the peculiar rhythm of life that these giants seemed to enjoy.

A laugh caught her attention and she turned to see a young woman running toward her. The girl could not have been more than thirteen-years-old, but she met Sol's gaze eye to eye.

"Are you her?" The young woman bounced to

a halt with a grin on her face, two silvery braids hanging on either side of her head.

“Her who?” the smile that Sol tried to keep in fought its way to the surface.

“Lord Morgarn’s new wife. I have been eager for a new sister.”

Sol blinked. “Um. No. I am not his wife, not that I am aware of anyway. My name is Sol.”

“I am Cheskuka, Morgarn’s youngest sister. Aren’t you the air elemental?”

“I am. But I don’t know what that has to do with anything.” She wandered over to a stand of fencing and took a seat on the top rung.

The young woman frowned. “The seer that came here many years ago told my brother and two of our cousins that they would find true happiness wedding the women who controlled the elements. Our grandfather said he would do what he could to bring this about, so when word spread that you were here, everyone got very excited. Morgarn has been quite bitchy of late.”

A light came on in Sol’s mind. “What is your grandfather’s name?”

“Lord Thosnas, Overlord of all Jotunheim.” There was pride in her dark eyes.

“That explains a lot. Stay here, I am going to make a call.”

Striding back into the longhouse, Sol could feel a wind gathering around her. She usually let off

steam at regular intervals, but being tricked onto the surface of this world was enough to push her temper to boiling. The column of air swirling around her kept the astonished women back as she passed the kitchen and entered the bedroom. Morgarn must have already headed to the blacksmith. With only a cursory examination of the com unit, she sent a call to Fen on the station. She grew more irritated when there was no reply.

Her friend was with that frost giant and there was no way to reach her.

“Why did you come back inside?” Morgarn’s voice behind her was enough to push her buttons.

With a concentration that she rarely showed, she slammed a column of air into his ankles and another swirled behind him to hit him in the knees.

“You lured me here. You tried to trick me.” The snarl in her tone even surprised *her*, but Sol had just trusted him with her body and he had taken advantage of that trust.

He looked surprised and then shocked as the air fled from his lungs. His features slowly transformed into anger as he tried to fight her control of the atmosphere in his vicinity. Morgarn slowly tried to get to his feet and even though Sol pressed on his shoulders with four atmospheres of pressure, he stood and reached for her.

Sol yelped in surprise as he made contact and

covered her mouth with his own hand. She struggled to breathe, fought for air and when her vision grew dim, she slumped against him.

His breath was hot in her ear, "Rocks don't need to breathe, Sol. Remember that."

His face blurred as she stared into his eyes, she fainted in his arms. *He called me Sol.*

\* \* \* \*

The floor was moving. "What?"

"That's two, but we will wait until I am a little more calm before we engage in anything of that sort. You tried to kill me."

"No, I tried to incapacitate you. I was rather irritated at the time."

"You spoke to Cheskuka." He said it like it explained something he had been missing.

"I did. She was very informative on the matter of why I had to be your true match."

"I was going to speak to you about that."

She groaned and sat up on the low bench at the back of the skimmer. They were travelling over the edge of a cliff and gliding down into the valley below.

"Speak to me now."

He glanced over his shoulder and jerked his head to the seat next to him. "Thirty years ago, a seer crashed on Jotunheim and in return for

repairs, she read the true matches of any child brought to her.”

“It was the holiday season and we were all gathered at my grandfather’s home. It was a game that we played, each child going to see the woman who was receiving medical care in the guest quarters. When I went to her, Ragnar and Tynir were already there waiting for me. She read us together. Women of water, fire and air would be ours. Not of our world but from above it. The women would be as sisters, chosen sisters, not by blood.”

She snorted to hide the chill that went down her spine. “Did she say anything about angry relatives?”

“Yes. We had to court the women, get them to Jotunheim and get them to be ours of their own free will. That included gaining the approval and authorization of their families. Your father says hello by the way.”

Sol’s mouth opened and closed in shock before she could get a grip. “What did you tell him?”

“Three. Who I was, who the seer was and why I believed you to be my match. He introduced me to your mother and warned me that his mother would be here soon to confirm that the match was legitimate.”

She smiled. “Let me guess. My mother was not pleased.”

He flushed under his stone-like skin. “No, she was unimpressed with my declaration of fate and told me that if I hurt you, she would raze my house to the ground.”

Sol’s heart warmed a little. “That sounds like my mother. I look forward to seeing Audril and Kathak. It has been a while since my grandparents were in the same sector as me.”

The smile on her face seemed to trigger something within Morgarn. He relaxed visibly and aimed the skimmer at the large stone structure in the centre of the valley. “Will you agree to be my wife then?”

“If my grandmother has no objection and I can confirm it with my father and you will stop with the counting thing. Yes.” She blinked in surprise at the sense of finality her own voice held. It was as if the key of fate turned in a lock in her mind.

She shook her head to clear it. “Maybe.”

“Oh no. You aren’t going back on it. You said yes.” He lifted her hand to his lips. His kiss skated across her knuckles and he smiled.

“And no more counting?”

“Four. I like the counting. It gives you an excuse to get close to me and the same for me to you.” He smiled and rubbed his thumb across her knuckles.

With one hand on the controls, he brought them in for a landing. Now that she had agreed to be

with him, she guessed that he didn't want to let go.

She didn't want to let go either.



## CHAPTER SIX

**T**he halls were full of giants. Mountain giants, fire giants and a few frost giants. Sol straightened to her full height and used her talent to keep the larger creatures from squashing her. The grouping parted and a large chair with a smaller one beside it was at the end of the ersatz hallway.

From behind the throne, a giant of no discernable race appeared. A woman of impressive proportions sat next to him when he took his chair.

“Morgarn, come here, my boy.” The giant’s voice boomed out and the room went silent.

All eyes focussed on Sol and Morgarn. He kept his hand firmly around hers as they walked forward.

When they stood in front of him, the elder giant eyed her up and down. “This little thing?”

“Yes, Lord Thosnas. Meet my most beloved Solial Kennan, air elemental and descendant of

Terra." He bowed to his grandfather, but kept his grip on her.

Thosnas looked her over. "She has Dhemon blood."

Sol bowed in acknowledgement. "Also Terran, Azon and Nyal. My ancestors got around."

The woman on his right started to chuckle.

"The giggler is my wife, Khasna. I am Thosnas, since my grandson has decided to forget his manners."

She inclined her head. "Pleased to meet you."

"It seems your grandparents are on the way."

"That is excellent news, Lord Thosnas."

His lips twitched and he gave Morgarn an accusing look. "Her grandmother is the admiral of the fleet and her grandfather is the captain of a battleship. Were you aware of that?"

"Her father mentioned it, my lord."

Sol looked over at Morgarn and his lips were curling upward in amusement. Thosnas was looking just the teeniest bit intimidated.

"If it makes you feel more relaxed, my father is simply a guardian-class scorcher ship commander, my mother a scorcher of diseased planets."

"So I have been informed. Are none of you elementals from modest backgrounds?"

"Not any of the Terran-born ones. Our parents were exceptional enough to be let off their world. It makes for rather intense relationships with some

extraordinary people. Their ability to blend with a variety of races also increased the demand for the Terran bloodlines. A higher quality of mates was acquired."

The analytical nature of her bloodlines amused Thosnas and left Khasna with her eyes surprised.

Khasna spoke in a challenging tone. "Will you be a good wife to my grandson?"

She inclined her head respectfully. "If you mean Morgarn, I will be as good a wife to him as he is a good husband to me."

The giantess smiled. "A good answer. Come with me."

Thosnas scowled. "We were having a conversation."

"You were asking her pointless questions, beloved. I will learn more about her in a private talk than you can in front of the courtiers."

Sol followed the other woman, pausing while Morgarn gave her hand a kiss before he released it.

As soon as they were out of view of the court, Khasna threaded her arm through Sol's. "Now, Solial, what I have to tell you may be a little much for you to deal with, but it is our only chance to speak privately before your new mate comes after you. He won't readily leave your side and that is where the problem lies."

"What problem?"

They walked into a private atrium and Khasna steered her to a bench.

“When Thosnas and I were first wed, he wanted a son. Try as we might, daughters were the only result. We have eight gloriously healthy girls, but no son to unite the giants of Jotunheim.”

“Eight?”

Khasna smiled. “I had no objection to trying over and over. Thosnas was very creative and loved each girl with his whole heart. The search for a son was purely political.”

“Did he take another lover?”

“No, of course not. I would break his legs and castrate him if he tried.” She grinned and a twinkle of what had to have been a spunky and bawdy young woman flickered in her eyes.

“The act of succession was engaged, the line of inheritance passed to Thosnas’s grandson. His first grandson, Morgarn.”

“Oh. So, if I am wed to Morgarn...”

“You will eventually be consort to the Overlord of Jotunheim.”

“What about Jin and Fen?”

“Their involvement will assist in stabilizing the fire and frost giants behind Morgarn. Your friends will not allow harm to come to you and their husbands have too much of a temper for ruling this bunch of thick-headed louts.”

“Morgarn is the most logical of the group?”

“Of course. He has a methodical approach to everything. He coached the other two on how to best approach their elementals. Ragnar was successful. Hopefully Tynir will be as well.”

Sol whistled. “That is very methodical.”

“He also likes counting.” Khasna smiled and patted Sol’s hand. “But I suspect you already know that.”

Sol blushed.

Khasna chuckled. “Don’t worry about that. The men of Jotunheim pride themselves on being creative with their mates. Thosnas uses my ticklish side for discipline.”

The moment of sharing was broken when two large and angry men pushed into the room. Khasna shot to her feet and placed herself between the men and Sol.

They paused and drew their blades. “Out of the way, my lady. We will not have that little thing as our lady when Thosnas steps down.”

Sol pulled small hurricanes into her hands and held them at her sides. “Step aside, Khasna. I will deal with this.”

“They may injure you.”

“I will make sure they don’t. Please stand aside.” She followed up her request with a light shove of air to move the giantess to a safe distance.

The first giant was a fire giant. Robbing him of air was easy. His flames flickered out and he

collapsed with a hand on his throat. The second giant was a stone giant and she knew better than to suffocate him. He lunged forward, sword extended, so she went up and over, striking his joints with hurricane-force winds, knocking him to his knees. She used wind to deliver blows to his face and disarm him in a flurry of hits. The swords lifted and imbedded themselves into the walls, nineteen feet up the wall.

With wind roaring in her ears, she decided a little show and tell was in order. With flicks of her wrists, she lifted the attackers from the floor and walked them back to the throne room. Morgarn and Thosnas were dealing with waves of hostile giants, holding swords to their throats. With a gesture and a wave of her arm, swords were torn from grips and took up a position high in the walls of the throne room.

She dropped her attackers onto the bulk of the crowd and lifted herself into the air, wrapped in whipping wind. "Enough. If you want to take your shot, take it now. If you don't do it now, shut up and live with it. I am Morgarn's choice. I know what that may entail and what it means to you as a people. If having a power-rich bloodline in the species is objectionable, you can stuff it up your asses. So...take your shot. But be warned. I will defend myself."

The crowd looked up and looked to the swords

in the wall and back to her. Two men charged and were blown back with a sharp strike of air. They lay on the ground dazed and when she gestured for them to attack again, they held up their hands in surrender.

Morgarn pushed his way through the suddenly silent men and stood in front of her. She lowered herself back to the ground and when he opened his arms, she went to him. Her face was wet with tears when she pulled back.

A shift in the air current behind her gave her a second's warning and she blasted a column of air behind her as hard as she could. The gasp of surprise matched the look of shock in Morgarn's eyes.

"You killed him, Sol. Ripped a hole right through him." He spoke softly, but she heard him quite clearly.

"I know, Morgarn. This is not the first time someone has tried to slip past my defences. Life on scorcher worlds is not a peaceful one." She turned to see the body of the mountain giant who was missing a four-inch chunk of flesh from front to back. He was wielding two daggers, even in death.

Morgarn gave her a squeeze. "I am grateful that you are a woman who can defend herself, but this was never the situation that I intended to bring you into."

“Khasna explained the situation. It is better that this happen now. Can we leave those swords in the walls?”

He looked down at her curiously, “Why?”

“As a reminder. It will help with the crowd control in the future.”

Thosnas barked a laugh. “Smart woman. The seer really knew her business. I have never seen an air elemental in action. Battle skills are not something ever mentioned.”

Sol leaned sideways in Morgarn’s embrace. “Terran, Dhemon, Azon, Nyal. Do the math.”

Khasna laughed. She was a little pale, but Thosnas embraced her warmly. “I told you Thosnas. More than she appeared.”

Sol snuggled into Morgarn’s arms. “That is the family motto.”



## CHAPTER SEVEN

Guest quarters in the overlord's home were flush. Stunned servants scurried out of the room when they entered.

"So, why are we here?" Solial asked Morgarn when they were alone in the room.

"Ragnar and Jin will be here in the morning. We want to give the courtiers some time to recover from their shock before you leave the building. We don't want them to forget who put those swords in the wall."

"Ah. Gotcha." She sat on the edge of the bed and he walked to stand in front of her.

She smiled up at him. "Did you want something?"

"That makes twelve."

"Twelve?"

"Thirteen. Khasna gave me your questions for my tally." He was grinning at her.

She stood up and stood on the bed, putting her mouth directly even with his. She leaned forward

and kissed him, putting her fear, her frustration and her need for contact into the kiss.

He answered her, his tongue stroking hers, his hands tugging the ties on her shirt and trousers. She used her hands to touch him through his clothing and then to part his shirt and slide it from him when the ties released.

Skin on skin, she groaned and pulled at him.

He caught her urgency and removed his trousers, then laid her on her back and tugged off her boots. His own boots came off and he rolled her onto the bed, pressing against her back and lifting her thigh.

He slid two fingers into her and stroked her until her hips rocked with him. He pressed his cock into her from behind and rocked against her. He slid deeper with every thrust and worked his arm under her, cupping her breast and caressing her nipples in turn.

She was surrounded by him. He was around her and inside her and for this one moment, she didn't need to be on her guard. Morgarn's free hand stroked her clit and as he moved into her in the slow, steady beat that she needed, she screamed softly as she came apart. Her body rioted as he continued to stroke into her, drawing out the pulsing release until she sighed weakly and slumped against him.

Instead of seeking his release, he simply stayed

inside her. "You must be exhausted, Sol. Rest."

"But you didn't..."

"You still owe me twelve kisses. I can wait." He pressed a kiss to her temple and she slept.

\* \* \* \*

Waking from cuddling and soothing sex, it was disconcerting to see Audril Kennan Lannick, her grandmother, sitting and smiling at her. Khasna was there as well.

"Well, little spark, it seems you caused quite a fuss."

She sat up and clutched the bedding to her breasts. Morgarn had covered her, thankfully.

Her grandmother's horns winked in the daylight streaming through the window. Her Nyal uniform was crisp and clean, as it always was, the rank markings bright and shining in the illumination.

"Hiya, Grandma. How are you?"

"Old. Grouchy. Looking for great-grandchildren. Can you help me out?" Audril's eyes smiled, though her face stayed serious.

"Not yet. I don't think."

Khasna looked hopeful. "I have to say, your grandmother is fascinating. She has lived quite an active life in the Nyal military."

Sol sat up straight and smiled. "She's also the

woman who taught me most of my battle tactics.”

“Then she is more impressive than I first thought.”

Audril blushed. “It’s a knack. It was our favourite game when she was young.”

“There are fresh clothes at the end of the bed. We will wait on the balcony until you are dressed.”

Sol took the hint that a shower was not an option. As soon as the ladies left her alone, she fought her way into the bright blue shirt and black trousers in the butter-soft leather that the giants favoured.

They were talking softly as she approached. As Sol watched, Khasna smiled and touched one of Audril’s horns. It was a very trusting moment for both of them. Khasna could be gored, or Audril could surrender control of her head and therefore her body.

She sent a light puff of air past Audril’s cheek. Her grandmother turned and smiled. “This clothing suits you, little spark.”

“Thank you, Grandma.”

Dressed and awake, she rushed to her grandmother for a hug.

The familiar smell of her own relative came to her in that hug. A light touch on her mind relaxed a part of her that she didn’t even know had been tense.

"I am glad to see you again, Nan Audril." She whispered it in her grandmother's ear.

"You, too, little spark. You will be happy here. I know it." The whisper was almost soundless, but Solial heard it in her soul. The echo moved through her until she was filled with it.

Audril pushed her back and looked at her. "You know that braided hair is not the best look for you."

"It keeps it out of my eyes when the wind blows."

"The wind won't blow today. Sit down and I will brush it." The order was unmistakable and Sol gave herself up to her grandmother's care.

Her hair surrounded her in a rippling curtain by the time her hairdressing was finished. Light braids kept it off her face and even Khasna lent her fingers to the complicated arrangement. "I don't know how I am going to undo this."

"Worry about that later. For now, you look lovely."

A masculine tone rang through the bedchamber. "I second that."

She squealed and ran to her grandfather. He picked her up and spun her in a circle until Morgarn's hand on his shoulder stopped him.

Grandpa Kennan set her on her feet and she smiled up at him. Winking at Morgarn over his shoulder. "Hello, Grandpa Kennan. I have missed

you.”

His Nyal-red eyes and Azon-velvety skin were familiar and she smiled happily at the donor of one-quarter of her DNA.

“I have missed you, too, little spark.”

“Why do you call her little spark?” Khasna was still next to Audril, but the curiosity was evident.

Sol smiled. “That goes back to my childhood when we were trying to figure out my talent. Two of my siblings went pyro early. I could start a fire, but only with a little spark.”

Kennan grinned and pinched her cheek. “And with three pyros in the family, a little spark was always nearby.”

Thosnas invited them to a meal and they moved arm-in-arm to a large feasting hall. The three couples sat on benches and a stream of servers brought out food, water, juices and wine.

The growing family sat together and ate their first meal as an extended family. As they sat and ate, the room filled with courtiers. Sol kept her light breeze around her, but no one came near them. Apparently, the display and the death of the man the day before had made its point.

Guest quarters were provided to her grandparents and part of her squealed happily. Having family around her always made her happy.

After the meal, they went on a tour of the

overlord's home. There were large halls, numerous guest quarters and a large stable full of the goat creatures. Audril approached one and the similarity in their horn styles had her husband laughing.

A wind blew through the valley and Sol lifted her head to read it out of reflex. Autumn was on the way and the harvests were due in. The air smelled of grain and yellowing leaves.

Morgarn asked her quietly. "What do you smell?"

"Grain is ready for harvest, two goat females to the left are in heat and...ick."

"What?"

Sol shuddered. "So is my grandmother."

He stared at her for a moment and then threw his head back and laughed. She elbowed him in the side and when he didn't stop, she took his air away. It didn't stop him, but it shut him up. The other two couples looked at them curiously and she simply shrugged until Morgarn stopped his giggles.

When he was calm, she gave him his air back.

"Can you scent everything?"

She sidled up to him. "You mean including you? Yes."

"Thirteen again. Interesting. What do you smell now?"

She ran air over his body and let her senses tell

her what was going on. He was aroused, his skin was hot and the dimensions of his body had changed below the waist.

Smirking, she grabbed his hand and mentioned to the others, "We have to discuss some figures. We will see you in the morning."

\* \* \* \*

Thosnas looked after the younger couple, bemused. "Do you remember being that young?"

Kennan looked at his wife and grinned, "I felt that young yesterday and again this morning."

Audril elbowed her husband in the ribs while Khasna snuggled up to Thosnas. He put his arm around his wife in appreciation.

"I think they are a solid match. What do you think, Kennan?"

The captain looked down at his wife and smiled. "I think that they have the potential to be a very solid and creative couple. Audril?"

"I think that she loved him the moment that she saw him. It's a weakness in her family. I fell for Kennan the moment that he questioned my orders. Athon loved Sarah the instant she was thrown to him in the arena. It may be unusual, but to quote my daughter-in-law, it's just the way we roll."



\* \* \* \*

Sol stripped rapidly while Morgarn did the same. They fell to the bed together, all counts forgotten as they rolled and writhed against each other until he was inside her. She was on her back and he slid into her from above, their gazes locked as he moved faster and faster until she screamed and he groaned. She felt him come inside her and in that moment, their minds linked. Just for a second she saw what he saw, felt what he felt and he did the same to her.

His muscles remained locked, back arched and when his body completed emptying into hers, he slumped on top of her, his arms braced to either side. Sweat stained his forehead as he looked at her and into her. "What was that?"

"It's a family thing." She caressed his forehead. "It will get stronger each time we come together."

"I felt your mind, your pleasure, the twinge in your left side as I gripped you." His amazement was evident.

"Eventually, we will be able to link during the day, in casual surroundings." She reached out with her senses and touched his mind lightly for a moment. It took a bit of effort, but the second time it was easier, a little longer.

She felt the tentative touch on her mind as he tried it. It was like being struck in the brain with a

rose petal. She barely felt it.

He tried again and when he gave her a solid pressure, she kissed him.

“When were you going to tell me?”

“When it surfaced. Not all talents continue in family lines.” She chuckled and smiled. “That is eight that you owe me.”

“Highway robbery.” He leaned down to nuzzle her neckline. “You are an extraordinary woman, Solial.”

She shifted her hips against him as he swelled to life inside her once again, “That’s just how I roll.”

He laughed and rolled to his back so she could ride him. She would bug him about Jin in the morning. Somehow, she just *knew* her friend was in good hands.

## **AUTHOR'S NOTE**

During the holidays, the final instalment, *Frost and Fyr*, will be published. If you missed *Liquid Heat*, it will fill in the blanks.

*Scorcher* was the book in which Sarah Anders met Athon Kennan. She was Pyro Anders and on her way to burn a plague world. He was a Dhemon/Azon/Nyal in rut and she was the closest match.

Fyr is our friend Fehniel, the daughter of a minder and a shapeshifting werewolf. She has issues, but they were created by having a mother who cannot be lied to and a father who has frightened the crap out of all young males. It has left her a little shy, but perhaps Tynir can bring her out of her flame-encased shell.

Can his frost tame her fire?

Oops...that's one.

Viola Grace

<http://www.violagrace.com>

[viola@violagrace.com](mailto:viola@violagrace.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.