



Love in a Time of Steam
by
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This book is dedicated to the many cups of coffee that were consumed during its crafting.

Chapter One

I stare into the eyes of my former lover, chained to the smooth gray wall of the bunker and on display for endless platoons of enemy soldiers. His usually impeccable, drab green uniform is torn and disheveled. Several cuts are crusting over into angry wounds, marring his handsome face. Seeing him degraded this way tears into my heart. I may hate him, but he doesn't deserve this, never this. Even in the face of certain death and humiliation, he is still the hero. From the firm set of his jaw to the fire burning deep within his steel gray eyes. *My darling Gray, how could you think me a traitor?* I want to shout it at the top of my lungs. Instead, I remain stoically seated next to General Dagnus, his greatest enemy. A man who also happens to be his brother, and I am wearing the uniform of the traitor he believes me to be.

"Ms. Wakefield, I assume this doesn't present any qualms with you. Does it?" Raising his dark eyebrow with an aristocratic air beneath the brim of his black cap, General Dagnus is daring me to have a reaction to the spectacle. Testing my loyalties to him and his cause.

"None what so ever, General," dropping a curt nod in his direction I un-holster the gun strapped around my waist. With my chin raised and an ache in my heart, I walk slowly to the chained and bruised, yet proud man that once held my heart. His eyes that are liquid silver when in the throes of passion are locked on mine, flat, cold steel. Not giving away a fleck of emotion. His belief that I would turn traitor must have killed the man I loved, because that man would be taking on every soldier here in an effort to escape. Instead I am faced with a deafening silence broken only by the muted sound of my boots meeting the solid floor and the constant clang and hissing of the steam powered drillers and their endless quest for water radiating in the distance.

"Hello Grayson," I force a smile, pushing it through hurt, anger and sadness. "You just couldn't stay away from me, could you?"

"You Bitch," Gray bites out. He is clenching his fists together so hard his knuckles are white.

"Come now Gray, you know I don't like rough language. Surely you remember that?" I am close enough to him now, his familiar scent of sweat and spice wraps around me, mocking me with memories of a different time.

"I remember you liked it plenty when we were in the sack," he hisses out.

"Well, that was unnecessary." With a sharp, precise movement I bring the butt of my gun hard against Gray's temple. "Don't you ever be so familiar with me again, or I will have you flogged." I deliver this line loud enough that any doubters of my presence here will be satisfied there is nothing left between Gray and I.

I move away from him with a determination in my stride I don't feel in my heart. I am so mad at Gray for forcing me into this situation. The heavy material of my uniform's skirt pools around me as I resume my seat next to General Dagnus, I make sure the slit rides high enough up my thigh I give Dagnus a good view. With a quick jerk of my head, I drop another nod to him. This is the universal sign of respect here on planet Ke'Naren. The human we had in captivity tried to explain the salute to me, but he disappeared before I was fully able to execute it properly.

"Take the prisoner down to the holding cell," General Dagnus orders as a handful of his soldiers instantly spring to life and haul Gray away. Gray casts one single look in my direction, a look that says any hint of the man who loved me, is now completely dead.

"And now Ms. Wakefield, you will accompany me to my chambers. There is much we need to discuss," Dagnus says offering me his hand.

A feeling of disgust slithers through me as I slip my fingers into his and let him lead me away.

The suns are setting, muting the vibrant pink atmosphere to a dusky rose. It is time to act and quickly before I get another “friendly” visit from General Dagnus. He loves having me at his side to smear in his brother’s face, yet I know he doesn’t trust me as far as he can throw me. With a quick flick I turn the dial to activate the thermo-environment heater, the small boiler rumbles to life accompanied by the hissing of steam. I am confident General Dagnus has my room rigged with a listening device and I need the noise from the radiator to drown out my actions. I must work quickly or my overuse of the precious water it takes to power the radiator will bring every conservator within the building to my door. Who would have thought something as simple as water could start a war?

Lacing my soft knee high boots tightly, I settle a blade in the top of each boot. Tonight is my most important mission ever, one I can’t fail in. As much as I don’t want to face Gray, I can’t very well let him die. I tighten the buckle on my waist holster and slide a steam pistol in each side. With a soft snick I push the button to slide the window open. The squeak and clank of gears turning rattles my already tense nerves as the window slowly rolls open. I just hope all this noise doesn’t set off an alarm somewhere.

Before I duck out the window, I settle my goggles firmly into place over my eyes and flip up the darkened lenses. I only require the clear ones since the suns have set. The lovely pink shade the atmosphere is colored, is the result of the red dust that resides beneath our planet’s surface. It swirls in constant motion through our air. Since they started drilling it has only gotten worse. Making goggles an absolute necessity when venturing out, unless you fancy your eyes getting caked with red goo. It also casts my white hair with a bright pink color. Which I find totally undignified for one descended from some of the finest of the Elvin forefathers.

A knock on the door interrupts me as I slide my first leg out the window. It won’t do to have an alarm go up this soon. Taking a moment to compose myself, I turn the doorknob.

“Hello Ms. Wakefield.” The conservator’s translucent turquoise skin is pulsating, giving away his irritation. “We have detected an overuse of resources originating from your room. I am here to remind you that while General Dagnus wishes your comfort, these are hard times. And anyone loyal to the cause should respect the dire need to conserve these resources.”

“I am very sorry for my thoughtless actions. It is good conservators like you that keep the Dagnus army at the forefront of this war. I will turn off the thermo-environment heater immediately,” holding my hand out for a formal good-bye I dismiss him. I hold in the sigh of relief when he grasps the tips of my fingers and nods his head in respect of my higher rank.

With a final nod he turns to leave. As I begin to swing the door shut, a sudden flare of turquoise has my heart dropping into my toes. Hastily I attempt to finish closing the door in hopes of retreat, the door meets with the resistance of a brown combat boot. “Did you forget something good conservator?” I ask as I swing the door open to meet the angry, glowing conservator.

“I do beg your pardon Ms. Wakefield, but do you mind telling me why you have your goggles on. I don’t think I need to remind you that a curfew is in effect, even for one of your rank.” Pushing his way into my room, he looks around suspiciously, gun drawn. If I can’t tone his aggravation level down soon, every conservator in the compound is going to be headed straight for my room.

“I have been experiencing a terrible headache. I was going to use the darkened lenses to shut the light out.” With a flick of my hand, I slide my goggles up to my forehead and try to make eye contact. This will either save me or totally shoot my whole plan to hell. That headache I was faking is going to be a reality in about two seconds. I catch the vibrant, glowing eyes with my gaze. The energy swirls through me, leaving a trail of searing pain lacing through my veins, traveling all the way to the tips of my delicately pointed ears.

“What, what is wrong with your eyes?” The conservator stammers before glowing brighter.

“I am just going to lay down and rest, so my headache will go away. Remember?” Focusing harder on pushing his mind, the pain traveling through me picks up in intensity. The conservators are a tricky race to mind control, push too hard and they go into emergency shut down, don’t push hard

enough and they alert half the damn planet. Relief swamps me as his glowing skin slowly fades to a gentle radiance.

“Yes, of course Ms. Wakefield, I shall let the others know. Is there anything you require before I take my leave?”

“No, thank you. You are a credit to your race conservator,” holding out my hand once more, I hope he will really leave this time.

With a quick dip of his head and shake of my fingers he heads off down the hall, finally. Shutting the door quickly, I hold in the need to vomit that always accompanies using my mind control abilities. I slip my goggles back into place and slide out the window. It is only about a five-foot drop, but the impact jars my throbbing head and is less than graceful after the energy expended to mind control.

With quick and silent footsteps, I move from shadow to shadow. It is relatively quiet since the majority of the solders are locked in during curfew. The only sounds accompanying me, are the gentle chirping of the luminous green lantern beetles scurrying around my feet. It is about three lengths to the garrison where Gray is being held. Certainly not long enough to help me figure out how I am going to convince him to leave with me.

“Stop where you are Ms. Wakefield.” The sound of a familiar voice halts me in my tracks.

Chapter Two

"I should have known you wouldn't go down without a fight, it just isn't your style is it?" I don't need to wait for my eyes to focus on the form in front of me, it is still engraved in my memory. "Although, I would have expected a bigger show about it. Sneaking out in the dark isn't your style at all."

"After being stabbed in the back one too many times, I learned to be a bit more subtle," Gray's voice filters through the darkness.

"You got stabbed in the back? Right, you are so full of it. Lets not forget who did the abandoning." The man still manages to infuriate the hell out of me. I breathe as deeply as I dare with all the dust in the air and give myself a five count. We need to avoid fighting and get the hell out of here in one piece, so I try once more to talk rationally. "Gray, I didn't come here to fight with you. I am here to help you escape."

"Right. Escape into the hands of my brother. You two looked so cozy together earlier." The crunch of pebbles beneath his boots gives away his position as Gray advances closer to me.

"Listen I am not asking you to believe me, just take your chances and come with me. I have our best route of escape all mapped out." Gray is close enough that once again the familiar masculine smell that is exclusively his surrounds me. Bombarding me with a million memories I have tried desperately to repress. With a sigh, I pull one of my compression shooters from my hip and hold it out, handle facing Gray. "Take one of my guns, then you can at least shoot me if I lead you into a trap." His fingers tease me with a light brush as he takes the gun from my hand.

The distinct click of him cocking it for action echoes through the silence, "I think I will just shoot you right now and find my own way out."

"Ok, fine if you won't believe I am here to help you, try and believe this. The reason I was risking my own life to get you out of here, is because," pausing for a breath I reveal my biggest secret, "I can't let the father of my son be murdered." My confession is met with astounding silence, hopefully this means Gray is actually considering the possibility in that thick skull of his.

Gray begins to clap his hands while chuckling in a slightly insane manner, "I will hand it to you babe, that is the best lie I have ever heard you fabricate. If you are trying to play on my paternal instincts you picked the wrong guy."

"Fine you know what, I tried to do the right thing for you and our son. His name is Gabe, if you care to know. I will just have to keep telling him his father is dead, because it will be the truth." Infuriated to the point of tears I turn to leave, "Good-bye Gray. I can't turn my son into an orphan because his father is a hard headed jack ass."

"Wait. Ashlyn are you really telling me the truth?" Gray's hand clasps my shoulder hard as he pulls me to a halt.

"Every word Gray. Is that paternal instinct making an appearance?" Turning to face him, I stare into the shining outlines of his eyes. "Are you joking with me Gray? Or are you willing to give me one more chance and get out of here?"

"I will never trust you, but this once I have to take a risk. Just in case you aren't lying through your teeth like usual. Lead the way babe."

"We need to make our way over to the south wall and walk about six lengths. That is where the forest begins and our best chance of cover once we are out." Not waiting for his reply, I begin making my way out of this place and away from Gray's psychotic brother.

"You know why I have slightest inclination you may be telling the truth?" Gray asks.

"No. In fact I would prefer it if you just shut up and followed me out of here."

"You swore. You only do that when you are extremely mad or exasperated because I won't listen to you."

"Maybe I picked it up since the last time we saw each other."

“How old is our son?”

“Gabe, is five years old, although you probably could have done the elementary math equation to figure it out.”

“Oh yeah, I remember the last time we fucked,” a soft chuckle follows his words, “it’s no wonder we made a baby out of that.”

“Oh, gods. Seriously is that the only thing your brain ever dwells on?” Even as a chide him, my body flushes with desire over the memory.

“Yes it is babe. I thought that is why you pretended to love me for so long. Or was it strictly about getting intel for my brother?”

The retort about to fly off my tongue is silenced as the high pitch whine of the alarm goes off. “Thanks for taking so long to follow me, now we are going to be lucky to get out of here at all.”

“The top of the fence is coated in enough sharp metal stakes, climbing over it would possibly kill us both and digging is going to take too long. I am hoping you have an alternate idea.” Gray says as he matches me stride for stride. We are out running death as the sound of heavy boots hitting dry earth reverberates behind us.

“I have a steam pack stashed inside my backpack and the cutting device attachment is looped around my belt, ready to go. It should take two minutes tops to get through the fence and out.”

“Nice planning, but I don’t think we are going to be a match speed wise once they break out the personal transport devices.”

“We will cross that bridge when we get to it.”

“Halt or we will fire,” a voice booms out over the loud speaker. “We have you surrounded.”

The clicks and hiss of a few dozen steam powered, automatic weapons aiming at us, makes the outcome of this escape venture look pretty bleak for us at this point. “Any bright ideas Gray?”

“I am still supposed to believe you didn’t set me up?”

“You will believe it when we are both lying in a pool of blood, dying in a few seconds from now.” Tears gather in my eyes at the thought of never seeing my little angel again. At least he is in good hands with Crimson. She will take good care of him. I know she will raise him as her own. “I am sorry I didn’t tell you about Gabe earlier. He is so much like you.”

“Holy shit, you were telling the truth.” Gray closes his fingers around mine as we wait. We both use our free hands to cock our guns. We are going out in a blaze of glory. Suddenly the earth begins to shake and the chaotic voices of many begin to ring out, just before darkness descends.

Chapter Three

Consciousness seeps in slowly, accompanied by a dull ache in my skull. Wetness is trickling down my face and I fear it isn't tears. This is confirmed by the distinct taste of coppery blood on my tongue. What the hell happened? Something is pinning me down and my mouth feels caked with dust. I am also pretty sure there isn't a body part that doesn't hurt. Wiggling my arms I determine they still function and begin pushing at the piece of what feels like a wall pinning me to the ground.

"Ashlyn, can you hear me?"

Gray's voice filters through my prison, spitting a few times, I clear my mouth. "I can hear you Gray. I am underneath a wall or something. What happened?"

"Earthquake, major one. I think we were lucky we weren't standing on the walls. I haven't seen so much as a wiggle from the fallen soldiers. Hold on a sec, I will dig your tiny ass out."

"Ouch, I think you are crushing me more than you are helping!" The debris is shifting, but instead of being lifted, it just feels like it is flattening me.

"Stop squawking. Aren't you Elvin folk supposed to be quiet and stoic, even through pain?"

I almost forget for a moment how much I hate him, Gray's ruggedly handsome face comes into view as he lifts the chunk of wall off of me. He is all straining muscles beneath his uniform shirt. The hint of boyishness lurking behind his eyes and in the slight dimple marking his chin, still manages to cause my insides to feel melty and squishy. "Shut it," pulling myself out from under the wall I stand on shaky legs and get my first glimpse of the utter destruction surrounding me. "Oh my, what in the name of the gods has happened?" Almost every one of the sturdy buildings has collapsed into itself and the wall is flattened against the ground. The steady hiss of steam escaping multiple pipes lends an ominous soundtrack to the aftermath of the quake.

"I think the planet finally rebelled against the massive drilling." Gray seems completely unruffled, as usual.

"We need to gather supplies and get moving. I need to get to Gabe. Oh gods, he was in the city." Choking back a sob, I rip a set of goggles off a dead soldier to replace mine, since the fall cracked both lenses. "Grab a set of goggles and as many weapons as we can strap to ourselves and carry. Also if we can find a transport that would be most helpful." The terror clutching my heart at the thought of what may have happened to my precious Gabe is squeezing it so hard, it may burst.

"Did you leave the kid alone?"

"Yes, I left my five year old child home alone. No, he is with a very trustworthy, responsible adult. I left him with Crimson. Now get your backside moving and let's go."

"You left him with Sin! She is a terrible influence."

"Just because she didn't buy your charm and sex appeal doesn't make her a bad person." Strapping on enough weapons to make my small stature strain under the weight of them, I head off in search of a transport.

"It does in my book." Casually grabbing guns off dead bodies Gray points to a building in front of us, "there should be a transport in there. Since it is also the watershed it is double fortified and should be mostly intact. If things are the same as when they dragged me in here, there is at least two transporters housed within."

"How in the hell did they catch you anyways?"

"Doesn't matter," Not pausing to mess with handles Gray kicks in the door as per usual. "What sparked this sudden urge to tell me we have a son together? I mean you've had several years to get around to it. And it isn't like I have had a lack of near death experiences since we have been apart either."

"Well this is the first one I had control over," with a sigh, I slide the door of the transport open. "And maybe I was finally able to see you without murdering you."

"You are mad at me, seriously? The nerve you have."

“She only has about a half tank of fuel. You stash the gear while I pump the water into the tank. I will also pretend to ignore everything you say from now on, so that I don’t murder you before I save you.”

“Well my brother, I give you props for almost making it out of here. You might have made it if you hadn’t allowed yourself to be used once more by the beautiful, but deadly Ms. Wakefield. You would think you had learned after the last time.” General Dagnus stands there with his normal air of cool calm, mocking his brother.

“I don’t give a shit if Ms. Wakefield is using me. If she is I will kill her, if not then you lose.” Leveling two double-barreled blasters at General Dagnus, Gray pulls the triggers.

Taking that as my cue, I jump into the transport and yank Gray down in with me. “We need to get going, screw your brother.”

“You had better hope for your sake he isn’t right about you.” Gray’s warning hangs ominously in the cabin as I quickly shove a lighting grenade under the boiler. A quiet pop echoes through the transport as heat shimmers through the cabin. The grenade flash boils the water and the transport sputters to life.

With a practiced hand, I jam the lever down that opens up the steam vent and send the transport speeding off. General Dagnus staggers to his feet behind us raining the transport with bullets. “I don’t care what you believe, the only thing that matters is getting to Gabe as quickly as possible. I didn’t get a chance to fill the water tank, so if we start running low on fuel I am pushing you out to stretch the mileage I get out of this thing. Just thought I would give you a fair warning.”

Weaving the transporter through the debris-strewn land, I pray to whatever divine being is listening that my dear Gabe is safe.

Chapter Four

Running up the tumbled down stairs to the remains of my apartment I am screaming Gabe's name until my voice is hoarse, the outcome doesn't look good. Gray is hot on my heels, I think the more frantic I become the more he actually believes me. The door of my apartment is hanging precariously from one hinge and a steady stream of steam is hissing through the busted pipes, creating a humid atmosphere of doom.

"Gabe, Sin? Is anyone in there? Clenching my jaw tightly in anticipation of what I am likely about to face I step over the threshold. My few belongings are scattered all over the cheap stone floor and Gabe's favorite blanket is wedged under the cooling unit. Tears obscure my vision as I stumble towards the precious relic of my son. "Oh gods, Gabe, no! Gray help!" Clawing frantically at the smooth ceramic surface, I try to get a grip on it enough to move its bulky mass.

"Hold on honey," with a quick surge of muscle Gray heaves the cooling unit off the side.

"He isn't there, where could he be?" Hysteria is closing in and my world is narrowing down to what ifs and regret. If something has happened to Gabe it is all my fault for not being here with him. Protecting him, as a mother should.

"Stick your head between your knees and breathe while I finish looking around." Not waiting for a reply Gray heads off towards my room.

Unable to heed his advice, I force myself to walk towards Gabe's room. Each step feels as if I am wading through quicksand as the dread clutches at my chest, creating an ache I fear can never be erased. My tightly laced bodice suddenly feels as if it is constricting my chest and making breathing an impossibility. Clawing at the laces I rip the offending garment off. Down to nothing but my light camisole, I can breathe the tiniest bit better. However there is still a brick firmly lodged in my stomach, which is threatening to upheave its contents at any moment.

"I don't see a trace of anyone being around when the quake hit. Are you sure they were here?" Gray's voice echoes from down the hall, the muted thud of boots against the floor indicates he is heading my direction.

Gathering my courage I peer into Gabe's dimly lit room and to my relief there are no pint-sized bodies to be found, just more busted furniture and half caved in walls. Where could Sin have taken him and why didn't she let me know? "He isn't here, neither is Sin, we need to search for a note or a clue, something," I say to no one in particular, I just need to hear something other than the eerie silence, punctuated only by the ominous hiss of steam leaking from broken pipes.

Digging through Gabe's chest of drawers I am positive most of his garments are missing. This is good right?

"Ashlyn."

Turning at the sound of Gray's voice I see the smallest trace of unshed tears gathering in his eyes. This is something I have only seen twice. Once when I told him I loved him and once when he believed I was a traitor who had used him. "What is it Gray?" He is clutching a piece of parchment in his hands, holding it desperately, yet carefully as if it were a precious treasure.

"You weren't lying were you?" Holding up the parchment he reveals a drawing done by Gabe with Gabe and Mom scrawled across it in a childish hand.

"No, I wasn't. Gabe is as real as you and me and he is so much like you. There is no denying how much like you he is, right down to his recklessness. Gabriel Alexander Wakefield-Deet is a force to be reckoned with."

"You gave him my name?" A single tear forges a path down Gray's dust caked cheek.

"Of course I did, no matter what you did to me. Your son deserved to know he had a father who was honorable and had an unflinching sense of right and wrong and was very brave."

"But you told him I was dead."

"No, I didn't. I was just trying to make a point. He has always known you exist. He even follows along on your exploits through the informant sheets. As much as I hate you down to your little toe nail, I have never spoken an off word about you in his presence."

"I am sure you save all that for Sin," Gray replies blandly. "Wait something is written on the back."

A shot of hope spears through the despair swirling in a dark storm within my soul. "Is it from Sin?"

"Yes, she says she has taken Gabe to her tribe, where they will be safe from the chaos. She says Gabe loves you and left you a hug and kiss upon the paper. She also left a note for me."

"What did she say to you?"

"She says, Dear Gray, if you are with Ashlyn, I hope they beat the shit out of you before she rescued you. Love and kisses, Sin."

Snorting back an unexpected urge to giggle my legs turn to liquid and I slide to the floor. Giddy relief combined with world doom and exhaustion takes its toll and I lose my battle with the giggles and burst out laughing hard enough to elicit tears from my eyes.

"Got something you want to share with the class?" Gray looks entirely baffled and squats down next to me.

At this close proximity Gray's presence is overwhelming, bringing back memories filled with pleasure and love and causing a deep longing to overwhelm me for a moment. On a sudden impulse I throw my arms around his neck and crush my mouth to his. I still hate him, but at this very minute I want him too desperately to ignore the urge.

Untangling himself from me Gray looks pissed as hell, yet oddly turned on by me throwing myself at him. "What the fuck are you doing Ashlyn?"

"Has it been that long since you have gotten laid Gray? Because I would think it was obvious, especially to someone of your expertise."

"I am glad you think I can just throw aside the fact that you betrayed me and your planet in favor of following a psychopath that just so happens to be my brother. Oh, yeah and you had my child and didn't deem it necessary to tell me for FIVE years!" With an angry growl Gray palms the back of my head and kisses me roughly and passionately, pouring all his frustration into this caress. With a growl emitted deep from within his chest he slides his hands down my back and grasps the back of a thigh with each hand. Hoisting me up in one easy movement, he stumbles forward until my back connects with a cracked wall. A steady stream of water trickles down its surface and soaks the front of my camisole, making the thin fabric transparent.

"Oh, Gray," the feel of his battle roughened hands roaming over the slick surface of my thin camisole is painfully exquisite as pleasure is tinged by the bittersweet remorse of what should have been between us. Hitching my ankles around his hips, I pull myself closer, savoring this moment of pure bliss in the center of chaos.

Gray fastens his lips to the nipple pebbling beneath the cotton of my camisole and begins to suckle it sending flashes of pure ecstasy racing straight to my core and leaving me achy with need. "Why do I still have to want you, damn it," Gray swears out loud as he pulls his mouth from my breast.

"Well isn't this precious?" A familiar voice tinged with a villainous edge cuts into our ill-advised romp.

The cold hurt that instantly slaps itself over the lust-induced haze etched on Gray's face says he is sure I betrayed him. "Dagnus. I suppose I shouldn't be shocked you just happened to show up here." Pulling the knife from his utility belt Gray holds the tip to my throat, "And I suppose you throwing yourself at me wasn't just a distraction right?" With a wave of his hand he silences my protest. "Don't say a word or I will silence you forever. Understand?"

"Grayson now is not the time to doubt me. I am not working with your brother and I never have. Except to save your sorry backside. Clearly you don't appreciate it and I should have left you there to die." There weren't a lot of escape options in my tiny apartment to begin with and since the quake

collapsed half of the walls, there are now even less. Another aftershock sends the floor shuddering and tilts me back far enough my spine collides hard with the lever to crank up my thermo-environment heating device.

The beginning of an idea blossoms, it is a lousy idea, but the best I can conjure right now. General Dagnus has built up mental walls shielding his mind effectively from my mind control abilities. So I am going to have to resort to a half thought out, make a break for it and run idea. This is the kind of idea Gray specializes in, not me. I try to get a good grip on the slick metal of the lever and twist it with my hands awkwardly positioned behind my back. It gives way with a screech that draws Dagnus's attention. Steam floods the room causing sweat to flow freely over my skin.

Shots ring out, but through the thick layer of steam I can't get a good handle on where or whom they are originating from. Fingers close around mine and pull me into movement. I know in an instant it is Gray. I would recognize his touch anywhere. Another aftershock rocks the floor causing both Gray and I to falter. "Gray forget Dagnus we need to get to Gabe and Sin. If these aftershocks keep shaking the planet, they may not be safe even in Sin's village.

Pain ricochets through my legs as the bite of a bullet slides over the skin of my right thigh. As I stumble Gray all but hauls me up over his shoulder and drags me through the remnants of my front door.

"It is just like you to play the damsel in distress when I am pissed off at you. Not that I mind getting my hands on your ass again."

"Gray are you ever serious?" The spot where the stairs should be looms as an empty void before us.

"Not if I can help it sweetheart." Heaving me unceremoniously to the floor with no consideration to my injured leg Gray unclips a length of rope from his belt with a grappling hook on one end. "Stand back unless you want another hole to go with the one in your leg."

Snatching the hook from Gray's hands I shake my head at the thought process of men. "Keep your damn brother from shooting me again, I will take care of the escape route." Even as I speak the impeccably uniformed general Dagnus bursts through the steam cloud, dagger in hand and tackles his brother. Setting the grappling hook into the thickest portion of floorboard I can find intact, I stomp on it with my good foot enough to sink it into the wood. Taking the butt of my bulky steam powered pistol I hammer the hook in tighter and let the length of rope fall to the ground. Luckily I am only three stories up in this building and there is enough rope to get us within a safe enough distance to free-fall to the ground below.

With a flick of my wrist, I yank two daggers from my belt and charge in to help Grayson. If we are lucky we will kill Dagnus, at the very least we need to get out of here in one piece. "Gray the rope is set up get down when you get a chance," I pant out trying to get a cut in to Dagnus. I feel he at least deserves a cut to repay the one burning in my thigh. With a heady feel of satisfaction, my blade sinks deep into Dagnus's shoulder. He repays the cut with a backhand across my mouth that has my head snapping back and stars bursting behind my eyes. The coppery taste of blood fills my mouth. Spitting out a mouthful I attack claws out ready to rip this arrogant bastard into pieces.

The ground starts to shake once more, with even more force than the last time. A crack worms its way across the floorboards between Dagnus and I. A sharp splintering sound is the only warning we have before a large portion of the floor gives out falling to the lower floors. Dagnus jumps back before he teeters into the void, damn his fast reflexes. He recovers quickly and trains his pistols on Gray.

"A little help over here Ash." Gray is hanging onto our side of the floor and his grasp is tentative at best. Using a push of my mind I send a wave of energy towards Dagnus strong enough to knock him back and cause the bullet intended for Gray to sail harmlessly into a chunk of wall.

"Gray I am going to throw the rope over to your side of the floor. Hang on a second." Pulling the rope up fast enough to leave massive rope burns I throw it down next to Gray. "Hurry your backside down the rope, I will be right behind you."

Without waiting for a second invitation Gray starts to lower himself down the rope. Swinging myself out after him, I begin to lower myself down the rope, burning yet more lacerations into the

palms of my tender hands. "Hurry up Gray I am catching up." A shot rings out above me. We are like sitting ducks at this point, and I don't enjoy being this vulnerable.

"Sorry sweetheart I was enjoying the view up your skirt. This is really a nice vantage point. Did you forget you're under shorts on purpose just for me?"

Rolling my eyes I remember why Gray used to drive me so insane back in the day. The only difference was I used to find it charming. Well maybe I still do just a bit, but I would never admit it out loud and especially not to Gray. The rope creaks and trembles beneath my hands and without warning it gives way and sends Gray and I free falling as the cement floor approaches my line of vision at a terrifying speed.

Bracing myself for impact, I watch as Gray hits the floor with a thud and remains motionless. I relax my body as much as I can considering the circumstances. The jarring impact sweeps through me as I make contact. It is made only slightly less severe with Gray cushioning my fall. "Gray are you ok?"

"I was before your fat ass fell on me." Rolling over Gray takes me along, pulling me out of the way seconds before a blade clatters harmlessly to the floor. Enraged at Dagnus's persistence I pull the gun from Gray's belt and return fire, even though my chances of hitting anything are pretty slim.

"Come on little sharp shooter, we need to get out of here."

"We are out of fuel Gray, any bright ideas on a faster way to get out of town before the damn city falls down on top of us?"

"I know for a fact Dagnus's personal transport is fast and I am sure it is right outside."

Skidding outside, I get a glimpse of the transport in question. "How do you purpose we both fit on that?" Dagnus's transport is an open model intended for one.

"You are just gonna have to get real close and hang on tight sugar britches." We both pull our goggles firmly into place and I let Gray slide into place first and fire up the boiler. As he kicks the engine into gear, I slide in behind him. Sandwiched between him and the boiler is going to make this trip about as fun as sticking needles under my fingernails. As we speed away we are chased by shots fired in our direction, reminding me that Dagnus will never give up his pursuit of us. I need to get to my Gabe and make sure he is safe. Then I am going to put an end to this once and for all.

Chapter Five

Gray halts the transport just outside of Tryanne and we both pause to survey the vast damage done to the pinnacle of our planet. Life as we know it has definitely changed. "I can't believe it is almost all gone. I didn't even see any survivors on our way out."

"There will be some survivors, I assure you. Unfortunately with Dagnus still alive, this will only kick the war into a more desperate fight. It will probably wipe out the remaining breathing beings."

"We have to stop him. He can't be allowed to terrorize us any more. Especially if we are going to fix things so our son can have a future to look forward to." All of the things we have been fighting about seem frivolous at this point, so I slip my fingers into Gray's and close them.

"You were never with Dagnus were you?"

"No Gray, I never was. I never betrayed anyone. In fact it was your superiors that betrayed you. They knew you wanted to quit the cause to settle down with me and they couldn't stand to lose their best soldier and most dangerous weapon."

"Why didn't you fight for us then?" Gray runs his hands up my arms and pulls me close. My cheek presses into the rough cloth of his uniform jacket and I feel like I am home. Being with Grayson is where I belong.

I could read it in your face, you believed them over me and how could I stay with you knowing that?"

"I am sorry I failed you, my love." Gray's head dips down to mine as his lips capture mine in a tender embrace.

"Gray," his name flows over my lips like a prayer. Savoring the taste of him I feel content and optimistic despite the chaos and destruction surrounding us.

Flashing me his lopsided boyish smile Gray pulls back and drops a quick kiss to the tip of my nose. "Let's go get our son, shall we babe?"

Rolling my eyes at Gray's choice of words, I wonder if he will ever have a more mature vocabulary. I would miss his silly pet names if he did though. I return his smile. "Yes, Grayson. Let's go get our son. I would watch any vital parts when you see Sin though. You know how she is around you."

"Gods, do I know. That woman is a menace." Gray once more ignites the boiler and opens the valve to allow the steam to flow through the engine and propel us forward, "We have about an hour to enjoy the peace and quiet until I have to encounter the she-devil. So hold on tight darling." Opening the valve up a little more, the hiss of steam increases drowning out the ability to talk as we speed forward. Taking the opportunity I press my cheek into Gray's jacket and inhale his scent and savor the second chance at being with him, as a family with our son.

Chapter Six

My heart leaps into my throat as Sin's village breaches the horizon. Her tribe dwells in elaborate tree homes, strung out amongst the tree branches. This allows them to exist in peace hidden from the merchant hunters that kill them for their horns. Their delicate shade of mint green fetches a high price amongst the aristocratic set, whose lives revolve around fashion and soirees. Sin is drop dead gorgeous. Barely taller than me she makes curves look good. Her breasts put mine to shame and her shapely backside has caused more than one accident on the thoroughway. She has a wicked temper and no shame flaunting her figure to get what she wants. But she is unfailingly patient with my Gabe and would give her life to protect him.

Tears well up in my eyes and fog my goggles when I see my little angel hopping up and down with impatience as I draw near. Of course he would know I was coming, he is a smart lad, with amazing powers for one so young. Gray jerks the transport to a halt as he gets a glimpse of the miniature version of himself. With a few sputters and a hiss of steam, the boiler cools down and the transport comes to a rest on the dense vegetation blanketing the ground.

"He, he looks like me, but with your adorable pointy ears." Gray looks like he wants to laugh, cry or maybe run all at the same time. Gathering himself he quickly puts on his quirky indifferent face, as if he is preparing himself for rejection.

Unable to stop myself, I fling myself off the transport and run towards Gabe who is doing the same with squeals of delight. With a skip and jump he lands in my arms and I squeeze my little man as hard as I can, happy beyond words that he is safe. Waving a hand in Sin's direction, I will catch up with her in a minute.

"Mom, I need to breath," Gabe giggles. His little face falls into all seriousness at the sight of his father standing almost shyly away from us. Slipping from my arms Gabe approaches Gray and holds out a hand.

I am unconsciously holding breath as my two men meet each other for the first time. Gray looks at me almost as if for permission before he slides his large hand into Gabe's childish grip. I take a step forward to help ease their meeting, but Sin's hand on my shoulder stops me.

"Give them a minute Ash," Sin instructs.

"Hi, my name is Gabe," his face serious as a heart attack Gabe shakes Gray's hand. "You are my dad right?"

"Yes," the sheen of tears is unmistakable as Gray returns Gabe's handshake.

"It is very nice to meet you Sir. Don't worry I am not mad at you. Would you like to come inside and have something to drink?"

Gray can only manage a nod while swatting away the tears before they can fall. Waving at him to follow Gabe up the ladder with a smile through the tears also welling up in my eyes, I can't believe we were so stupid as to let a terrible lie tear us apart.

"Oh gods, I don't think I will be able to spend time with the pair of you since you have turned into sentimental ninnies." With a flick of her black polished nails Sin pushes a few equally black strands of hair from her startling, vibrant emerald eyes. "Alright, since I know you are dying to know how it is going in there, we should head in. I am totally making you take a shot of elixir once we are inside, mellow you the hell out."

Sin tucks my arm into hers and halts my flight to the house, "Sin, seriously I am fine, I am mellow and I promise to keep the sappy emotional business to myself."

"Right, just like Gray is keeping his hands to himself now that you two are back together. You are back together aren't you?" Sin arches an eyebrow that lets me know what she thinks about my choice in men.

"I don't recall that being any of your business. Not, to mention you have the absolute worst taste in men ever." I throw over my shoulder while grasping the lower rung of the rope ladder and prepare to pull myself into Sin's tree house.

"Yes, but I use them, I don't let them use me or stomp all over my heart or have you conveniently forgotten that part. I am going to at least kick his ass, you know." Sin hollers up as she pulls herself up the ladder behind me.

"Leave Gray alone Sin. There are far more important things to worry about." I pull myself onto the platform of the tree house and feel a little more at ease. The world has gone to shit yes, but I am safe amongst people that are practically my second family and everyone that I truly care about is here with me.

"Well you are like my sister Ash and I am not going to let that man waltz back into your life, just to leave at the first sign of trouble. I watched it turn you inside out." Sin glares at me as she hauls herself up onto the platform. As if to make good on her word she marches towards the door.

"Damn it Sin," I holler at her as I follow hot on her heels into the house. I run smack into Sin as I barrel through the door. Gray and Gabe are sitting together on the couch talking seriously, man to man.

"Don't worry Dad, I know Mom still loves you," Gabe confides.

"How do you know that?" Gray asks while making eye contact with me.

"She looks at your pictures a lot and sometimes her eyes get all teary, even though she never admits it. She always blames it on the dust." Gabe looks up and smiles sheepishly at me. "Hi, Mom."

"Hi Gabe," I say with a small smile and a raised eyebrow. I didn't know I birthed such a little traitor. I pull off my goggles and take the glass of elixir Sin hands me. "Thanks," I say as I down the entire contents in one gulp. The searing path it burns down my throat pulls a grimace over my face.

"Want one Gray?" Sin asks handing him a glass with a deceptively sweet smile.

"Sure," Gray answers hesitantly. He looks over the glass carefully as if he expects Sin to have poisoned his. With a shrug he salutes her with his glass and downs the contents.

"So what is going on out there? Things were in bad shape when I got Gabe and I out after the first big shock. I have felt small ripples of aftershocks even out here, that can't bode well for the city." Sin sinks onto the couch next to Gabe and ruffles his hair affectionately.

"The city is in chaos and as far as we could tell survivors are going to be few and far between. I think life as we have known it on this planet is over." Gray says with a matter of fact air. He takes things in stride, nothing ruffles his feathers.

"We barely got out of the apartment before it started collapsing. Thanks for putting the note where it was easy to find by the way. I only had a heart attack before Gray found it and brought it to me." I say with a glare to Sin.

"Well I didn't want to put it anywhere obvious in case someone else made it to the apartment before you guys. I know how much you need to keep Gabe's existence a secret from certain members of both organizations."

"You are right as always Sin," I concede. "Still that little scare took years off my life I am sure." I smile as I see Gabe's eyes fighting to stay open. The excitement of the day is catching up to him as his head does a final droop and tilts over onto Sin's shoulder.

"Thanks for the note by the way. I love you too darling," Gray says to Sin while flipping up his middle finger in Sin's direction. The astronaut that landed here a few years back showed that to Gray and he has adopted it ever since.

"I am not going to have General Dagnus threatening me or my son any more. I know he is your brother and I am not going to ask you to kill him, but I plan on it. As soon as possible. Sin, do you mind if I borrow some weapons? I am going to get changed into some more practical clothing and go hunt his ass down. Now that most of his army is gone, I can finally get to him."

"I am not going to let you go after him by yourself darling. Yes, he is my brother, but he lost his way long ago and he is a threat to everything I hold dear now. If it comes down to him or you, I choose

you." Gray comes over to the bench I am perched upon and grasps my hand. "I failed you once and I don't plan to again."

Sin makes a gagging sound as she glares at Gray, "I don't believe you for one second. I swear to the Gods if you hurt Ash again I will kill you with a smile upon my face."

"It is always a pleasure to see you Sin. You have no idea how often I have longed to engage in this witty banter with you over the last few years. It is like a piece of me has been missing." Gray winks at Sin and sends her an air kiss.

"We all know you are just mad because I don't swoon at the sight of you," Sin says with an eyebrow arched in Gray's direction.

"Well clearly there is something wrong with you. Can you point us in a direction where we can get cleaned up and rest for a few before we go out to take care of unfinished business? Will you please watch out for Gabe in our absence?"

"Take the bedroom down the hall and to the right. I have some of both of your clothes in the closet. When I moved I took them with me, just in case. I don't want to hear any wild sex sounds coming out of there either."

"I make no promises sweet cheeks," Gray sweeps me up in his arms and carries me down the hall.

"Gray, seriously do you have to annoy Sin, she is just trying to help?" Even as I chastise, my long dormant sex drive kicks in at being this close to Gray.

Gray hurriedly opens the door and sweeps me through, "How long do you think the little guy will be asleep for?"

"Probably for the rest of the night." I can tell where Gray's thoughts are heading and I am totally on board. "Why? What are you planning Mr. Nighton?"

"Let me show you, I have always been better with my hands," Gray says, a million promises of fulfilling my carnal longings lurking in his molten silver eyes.

Chapter Seven

The instant the door shuts behind us Gray has me pinned up against it. His hands on me are both urgent and soft at the same time. "Gray, don't you think we should talk," I gasp out, trying to remember what the issue was in the first place.

"Later, I promise. But right now I am going to remind you of why you used to love me so much," Gray says a spark of wicked lust dancing in his silver eyes.

"You seem awfully arrogant, you know they say arrogance is unattractive in a man." I manage to get out as one of his hands begins roaming under my skirt.

I grasp a handful of his thick coffee colored hair in my hand and force his mouth to mine. Right now I need him, the only man I have ever loved. His lips meet mine, each caress urgent and hard as we fight to get closer. "This doesn't mean I have forgiven you," I say with a sly smile during a break in our kiss.

"Of course it doesn't," His fingers roam higher and with confident fingers he strokes a caress over my feminine folds.

"Fuck," I breathe out, uncaring I have violated my own distaste for such vulgar words.

"That's my girl" Gray growls out as he captures my bottom lip in between his teeth. He wraps his arms around me and stumbles towards the low, but wide sleeping cot that dominates the room. "I have missed the taste of you Ash," he confesses as he lowers me to the surface of the cot.

Unable to form a coherent thought I can't keep the moan of satisfaction from leaving my lips as he sucks a mouthful of the tender flesh on my throat. A flash of pleasure and pain lances through my body and shoots straight to my core as his teeth clamp down hard enough to leave marks. "Gray please," I beg. I am unsure of exactly what I want, I only know what I need. I need Gray inside of me, filling the void that has been haunting me over the past five years.

"Not yet, babe. I have been without you too long to rush this. The world be damned. I am going to take my sweet time with you." Gray sits back and begins to slowly unlace my boots before pulling them off and throwing them to the floor. With slow seductive strokes he rolls my stockings off one by one. He takes one of them and wraps it gently around the spot on my thigh that Dagnus's bullet nicked. With gentle pressure he ties the makeshift bandage in place, before dropping a kiss to it. Lifting my left foot he presses a kiss to the top of my foot, he moves forward, slowly marking each inch of flesh with a swirl of tongue and a kiss. My body is writhing with pleasure and he hasn't even made it up my calf. A smug masculine smirk settles over his face as he surveys my ecstasy-induced state. "Been awhile huh?"

"Oh, only five years I pant out." Little bursts of light are flickering behind my eyes and obscuring my vision. I know I shouldn't give him so much control over me this soon, but I have no desire to fight this.

"Really?" Curiosity is thick in his voice at my confession. "Well, then I guess I am going to really have to do this right." Rolling me over to my stomach Gray pulls my skirt up around my waist, his hands glide a slow path down each buttock and to my thighs, and he replaces his hands with his lips and follows the curve where my thighs meet my ass. The flesh is so tender this sends a melting sensation flowing through me. Each swipe of his tongue ignites my nerve endings and my body is so sensitized that a slight brush to my pulsating core or nipples will send me over the edge. Abandoning the curve of my ass his lips connect at the base of my spine and his tongue sojourns over the twin dimples on my lower back. My body is melting into the cot and my limbs feel heavy and my sex is pulsating with need. "Gray please."

"Please what? Tell me what you want Baby." Gray rolls me over and straddles me, his hard, thick erection pushing into me through his uniform pants.

"I want you inside me, please! I need you," This confession costs me more control than I want him to have, but if it brings the relief I so desperately need, it is worth it. Not waiting for him to play more games, I force myself to sit up and take control. With fingers that are shaking with need, I undo the clasp holding his utility belt into place and let it slide to the bed. The buttons on his trousers prove difficult to slide through the holes, but with a little persistence I am victorious. Wasting no time I shove his pants down and release his cock from its confines. I run my fingers over its hard length, its familiar velvety texture sends another shiver of desire flowing through me. "Tell me you want me Gray," I command as my tongue flicks out to swirl around the engorged head. Even his taste is familiar and spurs on the heat building within me, threatening internal combustion. If they could harness the energy that flows between each touch we share, the war over water would be obsolete.

"I have wanted you every day for the past five years. I have never stopped wanting you," Gray growls out as his hands fist in my hair and urges my mouth further down his pulsating shaft. "You are all I ever wanted."

As my mouth leaves the heat of his cock, Gray pushes me back onto the cot. He pulls my skirt off quickly before he climbs on top of me, hands plundering newly bared flesh. "I have been waiting to do this for so long," he pants out as he thrusts his full length into my heat in one strong motion. He pauses for a moment, completely buried within me, his eyes molten with desire. "Tell me you still love me Ash, and tell me you want to be with me. I am not letting you go again."

"I do still love you Gray, I never stopped," I say as my hips lift up, trying to take more of him in.

"Good," he says as he takes his cue from my hips and begins to thrust in and out with abandon. As if he is trying to satisfy five years of longing in a single mating.

My fingers sink into the rough cloth of his uniform jacket as I impatiently try to shove it off of him. I need to feel his naked flesh beneath my fingers. With a grunt Gray pushes my hand to the side and hurriedly shrugs out of his jacket and shirt. I slide my fingers over the bare expanse of skin tracing each familiar scar and discovering a few new ones. My fingernails dig into his shoulder as I anchor myself so I can match him thrust for thrust. Each time our bodies join together my world is fracturing and a crack is worming its way through the wall I put up around my heart. Liquid fire is flowing through my veins and my mind is clouded with pleasure and love for Gray. My hips buck against him, frantically seeking relief for the ache growing as the heat blossoming within is becoming too much to endure.

Gray pauses for a moment, our combined heavy breathing is echoing through the silent room. "I love you Ashlyn", he confesses in a whisper. His mouth finds mine and our kiss is filled with desperation and longing and all the time we lost due to a stupid lie. He begins moving again, reaching to my very soul with each thrust.

"I love you too," I manage to choke out around the threatening tears. My body, overcome with so many emotions swirling through me at once, shatters with an earth-moving climax as I shudder beneath Gray, clinging to him and a second chance.

"Jesus Ashlyn," Gray breaths into my hair as he thrusts once more and reaches his own completion. Collapsing on my chest, Gray cradles me close as our bodies slick with sweat cling to each other.

Everything I have held inside that I have wanted to say to Gray since our parting five years ago is about to tumble forth, when a shot rings out. Gray and I are up in an instant, grabbing weapons and clothing. We both have twin looks of anger and terror etched upon our faces.

Chapter Eight

Gray skids around the corner ahead of me, we are both half dressed and wielding weapons. We are brought up short at the sight of Dagnus squatting down next to Gabe. Gabe is holding one of Dagnus's guns and look of childish delight is etched on his young face. Where the hell is Sin? She is going to have some major explaining to do when she gets her backside up here. I am puzzled why Gabe would trust Dagnus, he knows better than to trust a stranger. It strikes me that Dagnus does look quite a bit like his brother and Gabe's newfound dad.

"Dagnus, what are you doing here?" Gray asks absolute anger shimmering through his calm voice.

"I am having a chat with your charming boy. He is a smart little guy and so brave." Dagnus puts his arm around Gabe and pulls him close. With a smirk skittering over his face, he presses the barrel of his gun to the side of Gabe's head. "I wish I had known you had a son sooner. Bravo Ashlyn for keeping your secret so well."

"You let him go," I say trying to keep the quiver from my voice. "Take me if you want, but leave Gabe out of it." I am so proud of my little man, he is just standing there quietly, if I wasn't his mother I would never see the lines of worry pulling at the corner of his mouth and the fear in his eyes.

"I don't think so Ashlyn. You had your chance and you blew it. Is my brother really that good a fuck? I can assure you I am better. You two are going to set your weapons on the ground and slowly walk towards me, and then we are going to go for a trip. Just like one big happy family."

Gray and I slowly lower our weapons, unwilling to take a shot with Gabe in the line of fire. A movement in the tree behind Dagnus catches my attention. One of Dagnus's men? A familiar face peers out from beneath the thick green foliage. A face I had long thought dead. So this is where the astronaut disappeared too. He places a finger to his lips, cautioning me not to give away his position. I see Sin's graceful form closing in on Dagnus's other side, she is pissed. Dagnus didn't calculate on Sin's wrath before he messed with us.

I slow my steps to miniscule, trying to give them the time they need to distract Dagnus. I am hoping to be within range of Gray's guns so I can shoot a bullet straight through that son off a bitch's head at the first possible moment. Gabe's eyes light with awareness. Leave it to my clever boy to know what is going on. In a moment of pure chaos, Gabe brings his elbow back into Dagnus's stomach hard enough to register a look of surprise on Dagnus's face. The astronaut leaps in from the right and runs a knife into Dagnus's side as Sin yanks the arm holding the gun away from Gabe and bites down hard enough that Dagnus loses his hold on his weapon. Seeing my opportunity I take it and shoot a clean hole straight through his forehead, a twin hole blooms next to mine. Looking over I see Gray had the same plan as I did. Shooting his brother to save his son.

Gabe runs into my arms, a single tear trailing down his cheek giving away his emotions. "It is ok darling," I whisper in his ear. "He is gone now, I would never let him hurt you."

"I know mom." Gabe wiggles out of my arms and goes over and slips his small hand into Gray's. "I am sorry about your brother," he says solemnly.

"Thank you little man," Gray hoists Gabe up in his arms. "He lost his way a long time ago."

"Sin, while I am thankful for your help, do you mind telling me where you were?" I glare at Sin as I reprimand her. I am not really mad. I know she has a good reason. She would never willingly leave Gabe unattended. It is good to bring her down a peg from time to time though. "And when were you going to tell me the astronaut was here?" I turn to the astronaut, he says he is human, but he looks similar to Gray to me. He is bit shorter and stockier, but his eyes are kind, "thank you so much for helping keep my son safe."

"General Dick Head shot me with a tranquilizing dart. Bastard," Sin bites out. "Gabe was sleeping, so I was checking on Aidan and how the conversion on the ship is progressing, when the lights went out. Luckily he was able to neutralize the effects with a shot of adrenaline, but Dagnus had already

gotten to Gabe. And don't go chastising me babe, if you hadn't been doing the horizontal nasty with Gray you would have been available to stop things sooner." Sin puts a hand on her hip and shoots me her famous glower.

"You are right, as always sin." I give her hand a little squeeze.

"What is this ship conversion you are talking about? Gray asks. Gabe is still clasped in his arms.

"Well, as it is widely known my ship crash landed on your planet a few years back and both sides wanted me and the technology I brought with me. When I disappeared everyone assumed I had been killed, when really Sin's tribe brought me here and they also recovered my ship. Over the last five years we have slowly been finding methods of converting the mechanics over to steam power. The plan is for me to go back to my planet, earth and see about relocating the rest of this planet to a safer planet, with more resources." Aidan explains.

I glare at Sin for keeping this from me, but I am smiling on the inside when I see the way Aidan looks at her. It is a determined longing in his eyes. She is going to have a fight on her hands with that one. The earth shakes again, hard enough to rattle even the houses in the trees. A cracking sound reverberates through the atmosphere. I snatch the looking glass from Gray's belt and hold the bronze tube to my eye. Far in the distance I can see a geyser of water spurting from a crater in the bright red earth. "Well I'll be damned," I whisper.

"Mom," Gabe chastises me. I don't think he has ever heard me swear.

"What is it babe?" Gray asks as he pries the looking glass from my hands. "Well fuck me!" Gray exclaims, a smile tugging at the corners of his mouth.

Members of Sin's tribe are emerging from their huts and peering through their looking glasses. A cry of exaltation erupts as they observe the fountain of water flowing forth, creating a new water source as it forms a lake. Things have changed on our planet, but we survivors have a chance now. Dagnus is gone, along with his army. And a new water source has presented itself, we can rebuild. Gray loops his arm around my waist as Gabe plants a kiss on my cheek.

"Are things going to be okay now Mom?" Gabe asks?

"Yes, Gabe. Things are going to be okay now." I smile at Gray and lean my head on his shoulder, happy in the knowledge that it is the truth.

Author's Bio

In her childhood years due to a strict family she wasn't afforded the luxury of exploring the world of young romance. So it was no surprise when at the age of eighteen she struck out on her own in search of adventure. It was in these early adult years she became an avid reader of romance and noticed younger authors were a minority in the genre. This drove her to learn more about the world of romance and write her first novel.

Nowadays when she is not painting her nails black or lacing up her corsets she loves weaving all the dark and twisted paranormal facts she digs up into sexy, action packed stories.