

A woman with long blonde hair stands in the center, wearing a voluminous blue gown with ruffles and a purple sash. She has her hand near her face. In the top left, a white dove flies with a bouquet of flowers. In the top right, a large full moon is visible. In the bottom right, another white dove stands on the ground. The background is a blue sky with clouds and a beach scene.

Viola  
Grace

ЕНАРАМ

Valeria has fought for her life and sanity at the brutal hands of raiders. She wakes to find herself in her own dreams and memories with a man made of shadows and embers with pointy ears.

Morpheus of Admar has tracked his mate across the stars only to find that he has to keep her in her dreams to erase the traumas of the past. His rescue efforts involve hiding at Sector Guard Base Udell where the raiders on their trail meet an uncomfortable surprise. How many mechs does it take to destroy a small fighter? Only one, and she is having a wonderful time.

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Charm

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**CHARM**  
**A TERRAN TIMES NOVELLA**

**BY**

**VIOLA GRACE**

## CHAPTER ONE

**B**lood dripped from his fists as he finished beating the males in the room into unconsciousness. Morpheus looked at his mate and swallowed a roar of rage.

She was lying against the wall, covered by bruises and blood. The exotics at this facility had almost killed her. He pressed his hand to her forehead and checked her mind.

She was unconscious, but not in shock, that was a good sign. Her mind also told him it didn't want to come out any time soon, that was a bad sign. Using his talent, he eased her into a deeper sleep. She wouldn't want to come out of this coma until her body was good and ready.

Time in a healing tube was the only thing that was going to help her now.

With a few short jerks, he pulled the shackles from the wall. She slumped into his arms and he held her tightly. He walked swiftly down the hall, kicking bodies out of his way to the shuttle bay.

It had taken him months to find her, but now

she was in his arms and covered with marks of prolonged abuse. Things were not going according to plan.

With quick movements, Morpheus buckled her onto the bunk. His mind kept the station trapped in their own nightmares until he had them away from the floating hulk of metal and he jetted into the vastness of space.

He looked back at his passenger with a grim look. If he had had more time, he would have done more than just beaten those men down.

She whimpered and he pressed her further into sleep. He hoped she would stay under until he could get her some help.

Morpheus punched in coordinates for the nearest Sector Guard station and set the ship to jump. The faster she was given medical assistance, the faster this urge to kill all of the slavers and gladiators on the station would fade.

His face softened for a moment, her name was Valeria and she was destined to be his.

\* \* \* \*

Pain. She remembered pain, harsh laughter and more pain. Her body was writhing with distress and her mind kept surfacing out of darkness, receding when it struck the wall of agony that was her existence.

A wave of warmth wrapped her in a comfortable blanket, keeping her from her body's distress.

Two red eyes appeared in the darkness. "Be at ease, Valeria. We are on our way to a guard base. There is a healer on its way to you. Your body will be fine."

She looked into the shadows and couldn't make out any more than the eyes. "Who are you?"

"Morpheus of Admar, master of dreams."

"Impressive. Why are you here?"

Shadows surged forward and his eyes took on a heated gleam, "I am here to save you."

"I don't need saving."

Laughter rang through her mind and it wasn't her own. "You do have spirit, I will have to give you that much. I took you from the station and you were near death."

Recollections surged past the barrier, the station, the torture, her screams ringing on the walls. Val faded away from the memories and into the blackness.

\* \* \* \*

"Damn it." Morpheus wanted to kick his own ass for reminding her of the station. Their torture had not merely targeted her body, her mind had also been assaulted over and over.

His delicate perusal of her psyche had shown the damage that they had done with cool deliberation. The exotics needed an outlet for their aggression between bouts and Valeria's abilities to regenerate had been stressed to the breaking point.

It would take all of his self-control and a good deal of charm to make it past the defences she had put up around her emotions. He would have to take each hostile memory and bring it out into the light. It was not a job he relished doing. It would be painful for both of them, but if she was to come out of this sane, she would have to work through it and he was going to help by whatever means necessary.

"Udell base to incoming craft, identify yourself."

"Udell base, this is Morpheus of Admar, I have a wounded Terran with me and she needs immediate medical care."

"A moment." The line went silent while the com officer checked on his credentials. "Bay four, make sure you set the lock and we'll have a medical team meet you. The beacon is live."

Morpheus gritted his teeth and followed the beacon through the thick atmosphere. The raiders would be idiots to track them to a guard base, but he had chosen the closest and the most awkward one for an attack. Anyone coming after them on the battle base would face not only Morpheus, but



also the most highly adapted attack squad the Alliance had to offer.

Sector Guard base Udell was the perfect place to bring Valeria back to herself.

\* \* \* \*

Fire, the world was made of green fire and there was no way to escape from the pain. Her body throbbed and hummed as it burned at her damaged skin.

Voices came to her through the swirling green, "Hold her down. This will work, but it isn't pleasant." The male's voice was unfamiliar.

A dark, honeyed voice growled, "It figures that the Kozue would generate a healer who did it with fire and pain."

"You get what you pay for, Admaryn. Now, hold her down, she is almost repaired, the rest will be up to you."

Hands stroked her hair and a voice whispered in her ear. "Valeria, I want you to think of somewhere safe...somewhere you go to relax and be calm, somewhere you are happy..."

She thought about her favourite places and sank deep into her thoughts and memories. Somewhere she was safe and happy.

## CHAPTER TWO

The sweet kiss of the southern sun danced through the parasol Val held above her head. "Holy crap, I'm in *Gone with the Wind*."

A huge hoop skirt swung gently in the breeze, her hands were covered in lace gloves and she was in the middle of a moderately attended garden party.

Ladies chatted quietly in groups and gentlemen milled around in graceful manoeuvres, vying for the attention of the hoop-skirted women.

A male approached her from the side. His voice ran through her like warm honey. "Would you care for some punch, Miss Valeria?"

She turned to him and smiled, her face freezing when she took in his appearance. Ruby red eyes were set in skin of the deepest charcoal. Midnight hair was confined in a neat ponytail but flowed nearly to his butt, highlighting the points of his ears.

"Um, that would be lovely. Do I know you?"

"We have not been formally introduced. I am Morpheus and I am here to guide you back to sanity." His bow was formal, but when he raised her hand to his lips, she was not feeling like following the rules of etiquette. Val's body flared with heat, making her corset feel exceptionally snug. The slight contact sent a signal up her arm and caused her nipples to harden against the cambric and whalebone.

"This is a dream?" She could taste the sunlight and smell the green of the grass being lightly crushed under her skirt.

"Yes. You suffered an injury, a trauma, and I am here to help guide you back to yourself."

She blinked and tried to remember what he was referring to. There was a grey block in her mind that was slippery. Whenever she tried to focus on it, her mind steered her away.

"Was the garden party your idea?"

He looked down at his tight, buff trousers and snug jacket. "No. This was an image in your thoughts. I thought the skirt would give you a feeling of security."

She blinked. "The skirt?"

"Those hoops do a good job of keeping me at a distance." His casual gesture took in her expanse of skirt.

She felt a blush heating her cheeks. "I am sure that is just what the age had in mind when putting

the ladies in these cages."

"Would you care to go for a stroll in the garden while we figure some of this out?"

"I thought you offered me punch."

"That was just an excuse for an introduction. Since this is your mind, we have to obey the rules of the situation in which you have placed us." He extended his hand. "Would you take a walk with me?"

With a trembling hand, she took his arm. The chirping of birds surrounded her as they slowly walked toward the hedge maze.

"Do you find the birds soothing?" His words were soft and he bent his head toward her as he spoke.

"I guess I do. The silence of space has never been my favourite place." The swishing of her skirts against the grass was another sensory memory that soothed her.

"Then why did you leave your home?"

"I was asked to. I was never any good at saying no." She shrugged and when his red gaze fixated on her chest, she looked down to note what could only be described as heaving bosoms.

The glossy blue of her gown flexed as she breathed deeply and their leisurely stroll ceased while he stopped to stare.

"Is there something you are not telling me?"

"Um. Yes, are you aware of the Admaryn

Project?" There was an undertone to his voice that she couldn't place.

"The planet given to the Terrans in return for...partners?" Her flush spread from her cheeks down her chest.

"Yes."

"I thought that elves were paler."

He laughed. "Like humans, we come in many shapes and sizes."

"From the *Terran Times* records, Demetrius has white hair, but your colouring."

"Different clan, same basic genetics." He smiled and they resumed their walk.

"I note that you are different from Sarah as well. She has dark hair while yours courses with all the shades of sunlight."

The pretty turn of phrase shut her up as they entered the hedge maze. The slow amble through the wide aisles relaxed her, as did the sun through the parasol she kept at a careful angle between her and the bright rays.

"So, what do you want with me?"

He smiled and patted her hand where it rested on his forearm. "Each sleeper was keyed to wake when his match was near. I was woken early by Taneus when he needed me to help him clean out a raider holding nest. It was similar to the one I found you in."

Valeria paused, tugging him to a halt. "I was

where?"

"In a raider nest. From the intelligence we gathered, you were grabbed at a formal gathering on Lhalos Prime."

The memories slipped away again. "I can't remember it."

He resumed their walk. "Don't push it, it will come and when it does, I will be here. For now, just enjoy this time where you are warm and safe."

She shrugged. "We are in my mind, so I am obviously alive, I will deal with the rest when it happens."

"Excellent. For now, just enjoy the day, the sunlight and the calm."

It took them more than thirty minutes to find the centre of the maze, but when they did approach the sparkling fountain, bright white doves and peacocks took flight. Val laughed a relieved, joyful laugh.

"Birds. I love birds." She smiled and picked up a feather left behind by a snow-white peacock. The novelty of the wide skirt made her rock from side to side as she idly drew designs in the air with the feather.

Morpheus leaned against the fountain and ran his fingers through the crystal-clear water.

When she finished twirling, she looked over to find a smile on his lips. Secure in the deep recesses of her mind, she stroked the pale-white feather

across his coal-dark skin, watching the softness caress his cheek, chin and the thick column of his neck where the collar cruelly hid his flesh.

She leaned up on her toes, pressing against him, and reached behind his neck to pull his lips to hers. The kiss made her head spin, so she went back for more.

His lips parted under her assault and he held her waist gently for balance as her tongue flicked lightly until he let her in.

His taste was honey and male. No doubt about it, he was everything she had ever dreamed of and quite a bit more.

A cool breeze up her skirt sent shockwaves through her and she backed away from him. Cold, she had been so cold.

Images of an icy-steel chamber, tables in a medical facility and faceless doctors prodding at her, struck her.

Morpheus reached out to her and held her hands as the images came to life around them. "Only memories, Valeria. They can't hurt you."

She clung to him as the cold wrapped around her limbs and settled in her heart.

The sunny afternoon turned dark as her mind grappled with the cold. The horrible cold that had been more debilitating than anything else. Those other doors were still closed to her, but she knew they held horrors.

"Hold tightly to me and refocus your mind. You are safe here, safe and warm. The sun is on you and you look lovely." Morpheus's eyes glowed as he touched her mind with his own.

"I am fine, I look lovely and we are in the center of the maze. The maze in my mind." She took a deep breath and a halo of sunlight streamed out of her. The darkness and images fled in front of the onslaught of her optimism.

In under a minute, the birds were back and resting on the edge of the fountain.

Morpheus was still standing in front of her. "Now, where were we?"

In true dramatic fashion, he bent her back over his arm and brought his mouth down on hers. The heat that flared between them was indescribably wonderful and Valeria knew one thing. With Morpheus in the vicinity, she would never feel cold again.

\* \* \* \*

Shaking, Morpheus raised his head. He was on a bed next to Valeria's, his hand twined with hers.

Flame sat up and looked at him. "Is everything going well?"

"Her inner psyche is safe. We are working outward. Is her body stable?"

"She is stable and recovering nicely. No



unforeseen complications from the abuse, so that is pleasant.”

The rapes hadn’t left her pregnant. It was one less thing to worry about.

“I am re-joining her. I will return when we have cleared the next hurdle.”

Flame nodded and reset the monitors to start the second wave of recordings. No one had seen a dream rider in action in recorded history. This was a moment for posterity.

## CHAPTER THREE

Victorian clothing was less comfortable than that of antebellum America, but it did cover considerably more. A deep violet walking gown with a matching jacket, rustled as she moved.

The streets were bustling and once again, Morpheus was at her side. They were walking and passing any number of people that she might have thought to be unsavoury, but with him at her side, she knew she had backup if she needed it.

"Your files didn't list your talent, but I do know you had one. What is it, Miss Valeria?"

"Why, Mr. Morpheus, my talent, for what it was worth, is charm. I am able to convince anyone, anywhere I go that I am a pleasant person who means them no harm and is a wonderful addition to their company or event." She shrugged and adjusted her kidskin gloves. A huge pin that tugged at her hair as she shifted posture was holding the hat on her head.

"That is a very powerful talent, my dear." He touched the brim of his hat as they passed other ladies and gentlemen walking.

"How so? I always found it rather frivolous."

"Think of it. If you were on the arm of someone who needed an inside look at a meeting or event or social group, they could send you in and get the information through you."

"Fat chance, like I would agree to that."

"That was what they were trying to get you to agree to when I found you. To work for them, I just didn't know in what capacity."

She tried to touch the memory, but again, it slid by. "Nothing. No memory of that event."

"It will come. But there seems to be couples walking in that park. Shall we join them?" The park he mentioned came into full bloom as he spoke.

"Did you insert that into my mind?"

"Perhaps. You find green spaces soothing and this bustling, budding technology is interesting, but you are so tense, I feel you ready to snap." With horses and carriages bustling by, he had a point. The garden seemed so much more... soothing.

They wove their way through the traffic and entered the walking park with a flourish.

Morpheus was wearing a top hat that emphasized the points of his ears, but the long ponytail was back. No one remarked on his colouring and she had to attribute that to it being her mind.

Despite the snugness of her corset and petticoats, she could get quite close to him. Her clothing was almost Edwardian in some ways and Victorian in others. She must have been a little muddled.

The lack of bronze indicated that steampunk had not even been considered as a clothing choice.

The park was bustling with friendly activity. If she had to guess, she supposed it had to be her logic centre.

Walking through a construct of her mind felt a little strange. Being trapped in one's own dreams was not an everyday occurrence, after all.

"I did not ask earlier, but why do you have a healing ability?"

She smiled and nodded to another couple as they passed. "It was a latent ability. Until I underwent training at the companion centre, no one knew about it, but as we started to poke at my talent, the healing surfaced."

"Companion centre?"

She grinned. It always got men a little antsy when they heard that. "Yes, I was a trained companion who specialized in awkward social situations and negotiations. My body was never for rent, only my mind was. Sorry to disappoint you."

He looked embarrassed. "I apologize. I did not mean to insinuate that you were for sale."

She laughed and patted his arm. "I am fairly sure that I was given to you free and clear in the Alliance's skewed attempt to continue the Admaryn species."

Morpheus inclined his head. "True, but you did not need me contemplating you in a sexual manner at this time."

His words spun through her mind until she caught the meaning, she had been captured, tortured and now he wanted to avoid sex as a topic. She stopped. "I was raped."

His eyes clouded with regret. "I should not have said that."

"Why? You wanted to avoid a sensitive subject. Unfortunately, we are not far enough out of my mental core for it to be sensitive." While Val didn't want the memories, her mind grappled around for confirmation of his words.

She stood in place and shuddered as flickering images and impressions rippled over her thoughts. Nausea rose and she staggered to one side of the path, throwing up into the bright green grass.

"You remember." He held her when she finished and gave her support.

"Yes. I don't want to be here anymore. This is a happy place and I am not having happy thoughts."

"This is your mind, change the venue."

Valeria closed her eyes and when she opened them, she was back on earth, wearing jeans and a

t-shirt.

"Is this..."

"It appears to be your home." Morpheus was wearing a skin-tight black t-shirt and jeans that should have been illegal. His hair fluttered slowly in the breeze, a black silk curtain that she wanted to touch.

Val swallowed the saliva that filled her mouth at his very revealing clothing and muscle mass, her disturbing memories a thing of the past. "Wow."

He lifted an eyebrow and smiled at her. "I beg your pardon?"

"Nothing. You just look very impressive in my native garb." She looked around her and saw no one. Not one person on the streets of her mind.

"The streets here seem empty."

Valeria grabbed a newspaper out of a nearby box and looked at the date. "It's the day I left earth. There were parties and protests in equal measure. The streets should be full."

"This is your mind. Perhaps you wanted to be alone."

"If I wanted to be alone, I would not have hauled you with me." The customs of her people did not allow for casual contact between those who were not pair bonded.

"I could have and would have gotten to you if I wished it. That is my talent, to work within the dream state to manipulate and control another."

She blinked up at him. "Are you manipulating or controlling me?"

"No. It would not be a good start to our new union. Your mind is free to do what it wills. I am only here for support." He wrapped an arm around her shoulders and pressed a kiss to her forehead.

She inhaled sharply, taking in the scent of warm male and musk that was Morpheus. Even in her mind, he was a strong presence, lending credence to his statement that he was here of his own free will and not a figment of her imagination.

She relaxed into the curve of his arm and simply let her body breathe and her mind rest.

"What did you do for fun around here?"

"I don't know. Um. Bowling, seeing movies."

"What is bowling?"

"A test of skill and coordination."

"May we do that?"

The thought of watching his ass as he bent to throw a ball made her mouth water, so she simply nodded and led the way to the local bowling centre.

"Usually we have to rent shoes, but since this is my mind, I think I will skip it for today."

The lanes were brightly lit and she selected her ball. "You choose a ball that fits your hand. Your fingers go here, here and here and thumb here."

She carried her ball over to the lane and

explained scoring. "When I bowl, you keep score and when you bowl, I keep score."

"And the goal is?"

"To get the highest score. To win the game."

"What do I get if I win?"

She was tempted to offer him whatever he wanted, but instead, she said, "One favour. I will ask for the same if I win."

"Agreed. How many games do we play?"

"The best two out of three?"

"Done." He pressed a quick kiss to her lips. "You go first."

Lightly stunned, she staggered over to the line and took aim at the pins. She centered herself and drew back the ball, swinging it forward for a smooth release.

Ignoring her audience, she leaned the way she wanted the ball to go and jumped up in triumph when it knocked down eight of the ten pins. She waited for her ball to return and took the second shot, making the spare.

Dancing back to the podium, she watched a bemused Morpheus take aim at the pins that had fallen to her charms. His ass was everything she had imagined and she was still staring into space when he returned.

"Oh, I am sorry. I lost track. How many was that?"

"Keep your eyes on the pins and off my ass. It



will be better for your scorekeeping."

She blushed. "How did you know that I was staring?"

"I was, so it stands to reason that you were."

His grin caught her by surprise, so when she skinned past him to resume her turn, she yelped when he patted her butt.

"Just engaging in a little light distraction. I believe it is traditional when you are in this kind of competition."

"Right. Hmm." She took her position on the lane, gave her butt an extra wiggle and the game was on.

When the first game was over, Valeria was in the lead by five points. Morpheus grew a little less frivolous during the second game and won by fifteen.

Down to the wire, they each focussed on their own scores and ignored their opponent's attractive features until the final frame. The tension was almost palpable as she lined up for her last throw.

A whisper of heat behind her caused a wobble in her step. Morpheus's hands on her hips caused her to jerk in surprise. "That's cheating."

He nuzzled her neck and pressed his lips to her frantic pulse. "I know. But any advantage I can gain is better for me."

She stifled a moan and dropped her bowling ball on his foot in self-defence. He grunted but

didn't let her go. "That was cheating, Valeria."

"Tough." She leaned her neck to the side to give him better access to her and sighed happily as she let him have free rein. There was no one around, she was safe and she wanted him. No matter what happened in the physical world, her mind welcomed his touch, his presence, everything that was Morpheus.

Her clothing was no barrier to his touch. She sighed, writhed and twisted against him and he hadn't even removed her t-shirt.

The slick boards of the lane made a hard bed. With some squirming and a few tugs it was easy for Morpheus to peel her out of her shirt and flip her bra off after she undid it before being born to the floor. Terran clothing technology was not going to slow down her one chance at an elf in her bed or her lane or her mind.

He parted from her for a moment to remove his own clothing. The zipper baffled him for an instant before he mastered it.

When the shirt came off and his jeans were gone, Valeria lifted up on one elbow to enjoy the view better. Black satin mixed with charcoal in his skin and the flaring erection drew her gaze to it like a black hole. She reached for him, but he held her hand back while he removed her jeans.

Their shoes had disappeared and Val wasn't sure if she had wished them away or if he had

tossed them aside. Frankly, she didn't care.

When Morpheus moved over her and rubbed his cock against the opening of her body, he caused a ripple of anticipation to move up her spine. She lifted up to him and as he surged into her, her cry rippled through the room.

The squeaking of her back on the floor marked Morpheus's rhythm. Pain irritated her and she pushed at his shoulders. It took him a moment, but he caught on and rolled to his back, leaving her to kneel over him, feeling the pressure of him deep inside her and the hard friction of him against her clit.

Val braced her hands on his chest and rocked her hips, picking up speed until he was arching up against her with every shift. He groaned and his hands gripped her hips, lifting and dropping her on him with a hard beat until she screeched and dug her nails into his abdomen.

Ripples of pleasure cascaded through her abdomen and out to every inch of her body.

Morpheus moved in tiny jerks while she came and when she went limp against him, he thrust into her, pulling her hips against him until he joined her in bliss.

Short jets of heat spurted inside her and she smiled. She leaned forward and pressed a kiss to the centre of his chest. "I have to say, this is the weirdest and best dream ever."

## CHAPTER FOUR

Morpheus sat up. The flashing lights over the bed indicated a disturbance on Udell.

Flame was next to him in an instant. "You were right, they followed you. Whatever you did, they are mad."

He looked at the Kozue warrior and asked. "Do you need me?"

"No. We have it covered. Phase and Tech are in their mechs and Stellar Storm is wreaking havoc on the incoming ships. Every staff member is in a life support suit and ready for a firefight. This is the most exciting thing that has happened at the base. Guardian has even worked out a way to get Pax into the main attack ship. Everything is under control here. How are things on your end?"

"She is coming around. Closer to dealing with what happened."

Flame laughed. "Given your boner, I have no doubt of that. Dr. Helsin will watch you for the rest of your time, I am needed in the war effort, or so

Digger keeps telling me."

"That reminds me. How much time has passed?"

"You have shared her dreams for about six hours."

"Good. I am going back in." Throwing decorum to the wind, he left his bed and scooted in next to Valeria, holding her in his arms as he returned to her dreams.

She was waiting for him.

\* \* \* \*

"I really think this one has to be yours. I am not that much of a Tolkien fan." Val flapped the long sleeves of her gown and put her hands on her hips.

"You look lovely." His clothing matched hers in silvers and blue.

"And you look like a negative of a bulked-out Legolas."

He bowed formally. "I will take that as a compliment. Would you like a tour?"

She sighed and extended her hand to him. "Fine. Where are we?"

The sunlight was sparkling on meadows of the deepest green, surrounded by hills tipped in mist. A low building shaped from stone and wood rose from the edge of the meadow.

"We are at my home. Or what used to be my

home before the sleep. Aissa assures me that my house has been well maintained, but I have not had time to verify it since Taneus yanked me out of my bed."

The mist formed a barrier, a wall that kept out the rest of the world. Only sunlight was allowed down to dance in the meadow.

"There isn't any sound."

"I will plant some trees and have Aissa bring some birds to the area. I remember that you like them. Up until now, I have preferred silence."

She nodded and noted that the house seemed incredibly large for just one man. "The house is a little big for just one man."

"It was my clan seat, the dream riders used to live here and the mists guarded our secrets. I was selected as a sleeper when the seers found you in my future."

Their slow pace was bringing them closer and the structure was getting much larger.

"I should also mention that while perspective is off here, the majority of the clan seat is underground."

"You build underground?"

"Most of our cities are simply small structures on the surface and extensive complexes underneath. Even the farmhouses of old had two extra homes beneath them."

"What destroyed your civilization?"

He sighed deeply. "The seeds were sewn with genetic tampering and an attempt to keep our dwindling numbers pure. Eventually, our folk either left to form colonies with other species or died out here. It is a sad tale and feels strange to be part of a dead race."

"I can imagine. There was some talk of the Admarnyn trying to stamp out humanity back on earth."

"It's true. When it was found that some of the researchers and visiting colonists were breeding with humans, an eradication plan was enacted. To save our genes, they wanted to kill all of the half-breeds. That meant taking down all of the local settlements."

"Killing all humans in the area, that could have been a goodly portion of my ancestors. Good thing they were stopped by the Alliance."

"Yes, and the sleepers were allowed to lock themselves underground while the Alliance lost us in the archives until a Terran would find us again. Your species was just waiting for their moment and now you are spreading through the Alliance like wildfire."

She chortled. "I know. Like a plague."

"Like a breath of fresh air. A few races have done this in the past, but rare indeed is the race whose females do better out here than the males."

"We've got a lot of rage."

“And intuition. A knack for being in the right place at the right time. I have read the recent records of events that created your Champions. Kyra found Admar in the archives, Samantha found the trail, Sarah found the location of Arena Station, Annabelle was the pilot that rescued Kyra, putting her life in danger at the time and Amanda Tyrell was the woman who pulled it all together in her status as negotiator.”

“That wraps it up succinctly.” Valeria was miffed as were many Terran Volunteers, the greatest women in human history and they were more well known to alien races than they had been to their own. “I have been meaning to tour the Terran exhibit at the great museum, but I have not had the time.”

“Well, welcome to my museum. The greatest of the dream rider treasures are at your disposal, in the dream state as well as the physical.”

They had reached the doors and while they had looked small in the distance, they were over twenty-feet high. They swung open without a touch and Morpheus turned to wink at her.

“Very impressive.”

The low belt of the medieval gown shifted with every step she took. It clearly outlined the shift of her hips as she walked and she had never realised what a dramatic shift it was. “Why did you pick this gown?”



"I like how it hugs your body." His comments were unashamed.

The interior of the building was more like an enclosed town than a house. Storefronts for tradesmen stood empty.

"This is kind of sad."

"It is very sad, but it is my home."

"How can it be so clean?"

"Maintenance bots. Aissa, the mind of the planet, has kept everything running and tidy." He led her to a wide, curving staircase that led down into the depths of the structure.

"You called your clan the dream riders."

"Yes. We have the ability to not only induce dream states, but to take sustenance from the dreams of others by riding their dreams."

She sighed in relief. "I was worried that this was injuring you."

"Never worry about me, love. This is all about getting you well." His smile held promise and he led her down an endless pathway of steps.

His boots rang against the stone as he strode along and they arrived at a wide hallway. "This way. The library is on your left, the main baths are to your right."

"Main baths?"

"Communal hot springs. There is a bathing chamber in each room, but the social aspects of bathing are not to be ignored." His waggling

eyebrows made her smile.

"So where are we going?"

"To my quarters."

Valeria stifled a giggle. "Why?"

"Because these stone floors are even worse than the bowling lanes." He swung her up into his arms and she laughed a free and joyous laugh.

The reason she was in her thoughts instead of out in the world could wait. For now, there was fun to be had and Morpheus to have it with. Her very own elf in an underground palace.

Another door swung open at their approach and Val was treated to a view of black, silver and deep blue fabrics and a bed so large it begged for more than one occupant.

Smiling, Morpheus sat at the edge of the bed and positioned her until she straddled him, tugging up her skirts to bare her to his touch. His exploration of her was slow but thorough and soon, she was dampening his hand with slick moisture as he rubbed, slid and circled her tender flesh.

His mouth was also occupied, kissing and sucking at her neck and the flesh exposed by the cut of her fanciful dress. His free hand worked at the laces of her gown and she figured out then that it was kept tight to her body by the ribbons he was loosening.

He worked it loose until he could slide her

gown off her shoulders, stopping it just under her breasts, lifting and offering them to him via the tension in the fabric. It had the side effect of pinning her arms to her sides as well. "No fair."

"My dream, my world, it's fair." He smiled and kissed her with a slow, lingering attention to detail that belied the urgency of his one hand at her breast, kneading and flicking the nipple and the hand between her thighs, working two fingers into her wet heat.

She moaned and bit at his lower lip, the only outlet she had available. His dark chuckle as he left her mouth for her neck and then her breasts made her clench not only her teeth, but also the muscles clasping his fingers.

His thumb pressed and rotated and she peaked swiftly. Her squeak of surprise made him laugh, but she was too interested in his continuing attentions to her breasts and lower to take umbrage.

He released her for a moment while he worked at his own clothing, but he didn't remove his tunic, only freed himself from his trousers before lifting her into position on his lap.

She slid down on him with a happy sigh, nipping at his chin and jawline as he stroked her back. "This is nice. I could spend all day like this."

His growl made her smile as he lifted her hips and set the pace. They pounded together with

endless energy and a riot of lust. He pushed into her hard and then again as her system overloaded with the friction and heat, propelling her into a shrieking frenzy of release that culminated when she bit Morpheus through his tunic.

His upward surge for a moment didn't warn her as he flipped her to her back and pressed into her with ferocity that kept her aftershocks going and had her lusting for his release, just to give her a break.

His groan and clenched teeth flashed white in the darkness of the room, his red eyes glowed and burned as he shook and spasmed into her. Once, twice, three times she felt the jet of semen inside her, followed by his slumping onto her with a grunt.

She patted his back. "I think you are wrinkling my nice dress."

He raised his head and looked at her with squinted eyes. "I will dream you another."

She laughed and when she stopped and looked at the bed, the room and the elf beneath her, she knew it was time to stop playing around.

## CHAPTER FIVE

**S**he was dressed in a toga, gossamer thin and crisscrossed with golden cord. Morpheus was in a toga next to her and they were watching the games.

“This is unexpected.” Morpheus lifted her hand and pressed a kiss to her knuckles.

“It is time. If I am not coming out of my dreams until I face my fate, then I will face it.” The grey veil in her mind was ready to tear aside and she held tightly to Morpheus while the battle beneath them wound to a halt.

The announcer applauded the previous acts and then it was time for Valeria to face the events that had almost killed her.

The veil of her memories was torn aside as she watched her body, strapped to a platform, being wheeled into the arena. She remembered the view, the shadowed faces jeering at her while she hung naked from chains.

The offer was made to the fighters that if they

won, they could do with her what they wished.

"If you don't want to watch, you don't have to."

"If I don't watch, I will be back down there in the arena. This gives me the ability to separate from the event. Recovering will be an ongoing process from what I have been given to understand." It was hard to imagine, but she remembered the coaching from the Terran orientation to the Alliance. Assaults were not common, but they had prepared their new occupants for anything. The companion training had taken up where the orientation had left off.

Rape was not sex, that much had been drilled into her over and over again. It was an assault no different from hand-to-hand combat. The idea was to humiliate and degrade an opponent, male or female.

When the fight below was over and the winner had fallen on her, she gave a grim smile.

"What is it, Valeria?"

"I wouldn't scream. It pissed him off." She watched, with her body pressed against Morpheus, he formed an anchor as she let the memories trickle past.

The horror of what she was watching below was dimmed by the knowledge that it was over and she was still alive. She stood when they started to move the platform she was shackled to.

"Where are you going?"

"We are about to shift venues. Since I wasn't dead, this would have been where you found me." She kept her grip on his hand and they were soon standing in the fighter quarters, watching the men tire of sex and progress into seeing how much physical damage she could take. It was an endless scene.

Morpheus was seething with anger. "One day. If I had been one day earlier, I could have saved you most of this."

She shook her head. "And if I accepted the assignment to Admar six months ago, we would already be living happily ever after. You can't change the past. You can only try to rebuild a better future."

His jaw was still flexing with seething anger. "That is a healthy attitude."

"Companion attitude. Our lives are spent trying to keep others happy, we don't always succeed, but all we can do is try again the next day."

His breathing was erratic, but she didn't want him to attack the sequence of events in her memory. She turned to him and stroked his arms in a soothing motion. "You came for me, you saved me and I am with you now. So, let's wake up and we can meet in person."

His eyes glowed down at her with a savagery that made her blink in surprise. His kiss was gentle, but his hands were iron bands around her

waist. She leaned up and into him, whimpering softly as her mind grew dizzy. She held onto him with ferocity as the world spun around her until it rocked to a halt.

Val blinked up at the bright lights surrounding her. She was in a standard Alliance medical bay with one addition. Most medical beds didn't come equipped with an Admaryn dream rider. She was reclining on him and he was still sleeping. She tried to speak, but her throat was dry.

A creature made of primary colours came toward her. "I am Dr. Helsin of the Sector Guard base, Udell."

"Water?" The croak was harsh, but she was relieved to hear herself.

He didn't respond, but quickly retrieved a pouch of water with a straw in it. The liquid ran over her tongue, inflating and soothing the abused tissues. The man under her started to shift and she sighed in relief.

Her body was hooked to leads, covered with grime and felt like she had been sick for a week, but she was alive. Time to look on the bright side.

"Valeria?" The dark, honeyed voice came from right next to her.

She drained the water and Helsin handed her another. She sipped and turned to look at her bedmate. "Morpheus, I presume?"



"If anyone else is in your bed, they won't be breathing long." His eyes were more brilliant in person than they were in her mind. "Helsin, how is the battle going?"

"We have taken prisoners and disabled the remainder of the ships." The doctor looked perversely proud.

Val inhaled more water than she drank and coughed. "What battle? What ships?"

Morpheus soothed her with a slow rub on her arms. "I was a little rushed when removing you from their custody. I left a trail a mile wide to this guard base."

"But why come after us? I was just a punching bag for them."

Helsin gave Morpheus a look that she couldn't interpret.

"Based on the comments of some of those captured, your Admaryn friend here left quite a swath in their base. They were eager to find him alone and undefended. Too bad he took shelter here." The laugh that the doctor engaged in was just nasty.

She leaned back as Morpheus continued rubbing her arms. It was a cheap and sneaky way of relaxing her, but damned if it didn't work. "You led them to the battle base?"

He chuckled in her ear. "It seemed like the most favourable option. An Alliance warship would

have been good, too, but the staff of Udell is appreciative of the opportunity to practice their attack drills."

"How are you even aware of the Sector Guard? They are a recent branch of the Alliance."

"During our evacuation and retrieval of a number of exotics, we communicated with the Sector Guard base Morganti to return many of the rescued persons to their homes. We stayed in touch." His hands were relaxing all of her tension and she slumped back against him.

"Phase has offered you some clothing. She will deliver it after she finishes her meal. Those ships had no idea what hit them." Helsin was chortling evilly once again before he sobered. "Valeria, may I examine you?"

"Sure. If my back rest will leave me alone for a moment."

"I also have a shower in this area if you wish to clean up, miss."

Morpheus left the bed so that Helsin could get the scanners over her comfortably.

"I will take you up on that. I feel rather sticky."

He nodded and set the scanners to run back and forth over her body. "Excellent. The shower is over here and to your left."

She swung her legs off the edge of the bed and her head spun for a moment. Morpheus was at her side and holding her arm for support.

Val straightened and took a few steps. "It's fine, Morpheus. I will be able to take a shower on my own."

"Humour me."

"No." Val pushed his hand away. "My hygiene routine is none of your business, scooter. If I want a shower, I want to do it myself."

She took slow but steady steps to the shower and a moment of privacy. She closed the door behind her and started the sonic shower. Valeria knelt in the shower and let the vibrations take the residue of her captivity off. Tears flowed down her cheeks as she let the days of helplessness, fear and pain run through her mind.

The hum of the shower gave her cover for her soft sobs until she felt ready to face her rescuer and the physician. As she exited the shower, a woman stood there with clothing draped over her arm. "Hello, I am Kahlia. Welcome to Udell. My mate Fenn is busy with your Morpheus. Fenn is just so pleased to meet a full-blooded Admaryn he is all giddy. I have clothing for you."

The woman seemed pleasant and cheerful, but there was a calm competence to her that denoted power.

"Thank you. My name is Valeria." She took the clothing and smiled at the lovely dress that would cover everything with style and comfort. "This is wonderful."

Kahlia inclined her head. "It is one of my new designs. I have high hopes for it."

It took a moment for Val to make the connection. "Khariel Designs! I love your stuff."

"Thank you. I do try, but with my current schedule, I can only do one collection per year now, but I am doing some very interesting things."

They clicked on the topic of fashion in that moment. "Valeria, please come with me. I need to finish my meal and you look like you could use a snack."

"That sounds wonderful. Not too quickly though, I am still a little wobbly." She pattered along in bare feet next to the guardsman.

"We need to get you some shoes. Nich should be able to help with that." Kahlia put her arm around Valeria and steered her out a second entrance to medical.

Val stifled a snort at the shape of the second entrance. It was shaped like a female almost her own size.

"Jenya will meet us in the dining hall. She stopped by to make the door so you could get a little privacy or girl time, if you will."

"Thank you. Will someone keep Morpheus from panicking?"

"That is Fenn's job. Ours is to sneak you out for tea."

Chuckling, Val walked alongside the designer.

A few of the male support staff paused and nodded formally to her as they passed.

"Why are they being so nice?" She was a little paranoid, but this didn't seem the proper venue for etiquette.

"They are aware of the circumstances under which you arrived here. Flame's attendance meant that you were close to death and the fleet that chased you and Morpheus was more than a standard retrieval force. They are impressed at how dangerous you seem to be." Her lips were twitching. "It must be a male thing."

"They are horribly easy to impress."

The ladies were still laughing when they entered the dining hall and another female guardsman stood and waved them over to a table laden with food and a tea service.

"Valeria, this is Jenya, Jen, this is Valeria of the Alliance Protectorate of Terra."

"Pleased to meet you. Welcome to Udell. Kal, is that one of your new line?"

"It is."

"Pleased to meet you, Jenya." Val extended her hand in formal greeting and Jenya took it with the careful grip of someone who had only just learned Alliance rituals.

"Pax is Terran as well, as is Stellar Storm." Jenya sat and poured tea for them all with delicate and economic movements.

"Yeah, we tend to trickle out in strange clumps." The hot tea went down easily. She sighed happily as she focussed on the dark liquid in her cup.

A small plate with a selection of treats was placed in front of her and she started to eat methodically. The guardsmen chatted along about the aftermath of the fight and Val just enjoyed the companionship.

It had been a long time since she had just been in the company of women. As a companion, she had spent most of her time in social situations. This time off was wonderful even if the reason sucked.

A Terran came through the doors and approached them immediately. "Hello, ladies. Valeria, right?"

"Right." The glow in the woman's eyes gave her away. "Stellar Storm?"

"Andra. Tricia is out interrogating the survivors, but I wanted to bring you this. Nich nagged me into it and there is nothing quite like telepathic nagging." She was smiling as she handed a bundle over to Valeria.

"Thank you. What is it?"

Kahlia smiled and nodded for her to open the bundle. "It's Masuo. We normally keep them for guards and guardsmen, but you need a little extra protection. No one is getting through it unless you will them to."

"I thought Masuo was just for shoes."

"The Udell Masuo is a larger and wilder breed. They can cover you from top to bottom." As Kal talked, a mask covered her features. The suit she was wearing thickened and crept up to just below her jawline.

"Wow. Even your mask?"

"Yeah, one of Fixer's little experiments." The mask disappeared again and the suit became a normal bodysuit once again. "Now, put your feet on the pods and breathe calmly."

Shrugging, Val did as she was told. Her feet sank into the pods the moment that they warmed to her body temperature. She panicked a little as the Masuo crawled up her body, but when it moved under her dress, warming and hugging her tightly, she felt a comfort in being clothed from the ground up.

The suit crept around her elbows and down to her wrists before it stopped. The neckline rose to her jaw and then receded beneath the dress while the arms and legs did the same. It looked like she was only wearing the light and flowing creation provided by Kahlia.

"Excellent. Good control as well, by the way." Andra was smiling.

"Thanks. This feels sturdier than I expected."

The ladies chuckled and Andra continued, "The Udell Masuo double as body armour and radiation

shielding. Nothing is getting through it. Considering your recent experiences, the base commander and the avatar agreed that you should have the extra protection."

Val sighed and decided to get it out in the open. "You all know, don't you?"

They looked uncomfortable and nodded.

"How?"

"The attacking ships were blasting clips of the attack on you as well as the vid of Morpheus's rescue. They knew very well who they wanted when they came to this system." Andra patted her on the shoulder.

Val groaned and pressed her hands to her face. Her distress was palpable, coming off her in waves.

Arms surrounded her and pulled her to a hard chest. Morpheus's scent was more fascinating in the flesh than it had been in her mind. She mumbled through her hands, "I thought you were talking shop with the other elf."

"I felt your distress and came immediately." His hands stroked down her spine and she relaxed against him.

Andra's voice was wry. "He teleported."

"What is it, sweet?" His voice rumbled in her ear and washed through her heart.

"There was a vid that was broadcast. Me and that...that..."



"Oh. I see." He pressed a kiss to her forehead. "That would be disturbing for you." Morpheus straightened and got to his feet.

A blond man of Admarnyn descent was entering the dining hall and Morpheus approached him.

Concerned for what seemed to be radiating from him, Valeria scooted after him. "What are you going to do?"

"Where are you keeping the prisoners?"

Kahlia appeared next to her. "It doesn't sound like a good idea. They will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law, Morpheus."

He ignored her and concentrated on the man who had to be Fenn. With a sharp nod, he stormed out of the room with alarming speed.

"Fenn, where is he going?"

The blond elf clutched his head and grimaced. "He is heading to the holding pens, but he won't know which the offending males were."

Val clutched his arm, "Take me there, he knows who they are, he was in my mind while I replayed the event."

Cursing, Fenn led the way with the women bringing up the rear.

## CHAPTER SIX

In an effort not to injure the innocent, Morpheus knocked out the guards in the hall and trapped them in pleasant dreams. He scanned the recordings of the prisoners until he found the holding cell containing the males he wanted. It figured that they were all together.

He was almost to their cell when a voice called out. "Morpheus, stop."

"I have to do this, Fenn. They can't be allowed to boast about injuring an innocent woman." Before Fenn could stop him, Morpheus opened the door and knocked out the first third of the ten men with one surge of his mind.

Bones crunched as he struck at those who stood between him and his three targets at the end of the room. There was a noise behind him and a fist struck him at the back of the skull, causing sparks to fly behind his eyes.

A cry from a familiar voice sent a chill through him and while Kahlia and Fenn took on the

remaining men, one had slipped away to grab Valeria. She squeaked in anger as he held her in the air, mocking about her wanting to come back for more.

What happened next would be burned into Morpheus's mind forever.

From under the gauzy gown, a hard shell of black covered her exposed skin, claws forming on the tips of her fingers and spikes on her shoulders and neck. Her assailant dropped her with a curse and lashed out with his foot.

She blocked his kick with an arm covered with spikes and a huge blade ran along her forearm, extending beyond her clenched fist. She drove her arm upward with all the power of her slender body and her attacker dropped to the ground, screaming.

The prisoners in the room froze at the sound and surrendered immediately, allowing the guardsmen to collect Morpheus and Valeria.

"Medic and security team to cell nineteen. We have a...I don't even know how to describe that."

"Aggressive penetration of the genitalia." Val was still shaking, but she offered that description.

Fenn winced and repeated the order into his suit and they left the room, sealing it behind them.

Morpheus rubbed the back of his head and blinked at the blonde Terran who was supporting him. "I have never seen Masuo used like that."

"When you went down, I rushed forward and he caught me. Everything else was instinct." She started to walk with him back toward medical.

He winced as he replayed the image of the strike in his mind. "Remind me not to rouse your instincts. Ever."

"They aren't all bad. But I believe we should leave Udell before we cause any more disruption."

"Good plan. Can you fly a shuttle?"

"Of course."

"Good." He grinned. "I will have the doc check my head and we will be on our way."

Helsin was frowning and a silver creature named Guardian came in to read Morpheus the riot act. "If it wasn't for that new vid we can fire back in return, I would be considerably more pissed at your actions, Admaryn."

Val cocked her head curiously and he fought a grin as Helsin examined his skull. "The vid he refers to is the one of you unmanning the rapist, Valeria."

Her blush ran across her cheeks and down her chest in a charming pattern of reddened skin. "I..." She didn't finish her sentence, but walked up to Morpheus and surprised him by pulling his arm over her shoulders. She looked up at him, her blue eyes wide. "I don't do that kind of thing regularly, I promise."

He had to smile. "I wasn't worried."

He brushed a few strands of hair off her forehead and pressed a kiss to the soft skin he exposed. Her light and feminine scent caused a hard jerk in his trousers as his cock hardened. The memories of their encounters in the dream plane rocked through him and he took a deep breath to calm himself. It didn't work. It merely dragged more of her scent into his lungs.

The physician checked his pupils and pronounced him stunned with a minor concussion. Only rest or a healer would be able to speed the process.

Jenya leaned in the doorway, watching with a calm gaze. "Flame would do it, but he is busy cleaning up your mess. On the plus side, the man is being healed via being burned from the inside out. That has to be a bonus."

All of the men in the room winced with one exception. Morpheus's savage grin was bright with the vengeance he felt. He looked down at his feisty Terran. "Are you satisfied with his agony?"

"I would have preferred him dead, but yeah, I will go with agony." She grinned with a savagery that matched his.

"In that case, our time here is done and we will take our leave of you if there are no objections?" He looked to Guardian.

The base leader nodded with a grim smile. "I believe it is time for you to be moving on. Admar

calls and it is demanding.”

Morpheus knew what was being unsaid. His behaviour had put him in the category of lawbreaker and the Sector Guard was in existence to stop that kind of activity. It was an order to leave.

“We thank you for your hospitality.”

Valeria piped up, “Come and visit any time, but I think it is time we were going.” She helped Morpheus off the table and together they walked to the airlock.

Time alone in the shuttle would be torture, but Morpheus promised himself that he would behave until she indicated that she was receptive. Whether or not the wait killed him would wait to be seen.

\* \* \* \*

The shuttle controls were standard, even if the ship was larger than the ones she had piloted in the past. It was a jump ship designed to wedge holes in two points in space at the same time. It took some getting used to, but jump ship was the fastest way to travel.

“Are the coordinates for Admar in the computer?”

“Yes. Just a moment.”

Morpheus leaned forward and brought up the data. The ship locked on and they were traveling at

ridiculous speeds through space in seconds.

She turned to her companion as the ship coursed forward on automatic. "Are you feeling all right? You have turned a shade of grey I haven't seen before."

"Space travel doesn't agree with me. I used the buried doorways when I was an active warrior, this whole flying thing doesn't agree with me if I don't have a distraction."

Val's lips twitched. She verified the autopilot and the distance to the first jump point and stood up. With barely a moment of thought, she dropped into Morpheus's lap and wrapped her arms around his neck. "There. You look distracted. Your colour is coming back."

Something else was returning to life and it was under one of her thighs.

He cleared his throat and wrapped his arms around her waist. "Thank you for your efforts on my behalf."

"It's my pleasure, but I think one of us should remain alert and focussed at any given time."

He chuckled. "There is still the option of meeting you in my dreams."

Val shook her head. "I am not falling asleep at the wheel."

"You don't need to." He brushed his lips across her forehead and it was all the warning she got. Her mind spun and she was dropped without

warning into a pool of churning water.

"How can I be dreaming and keep an eye on the shuttle?"

A shadow surged out of the water next to her, his gleaming eyes bright in the dimness. "I am awake behind the controls. This is a far better use of time."

"Where are we?"

"The bathing rooms of the dream riders. You will see it in the flesh very soon." He tugged her by the hand into shallower waters.

"Is the water always this warm?"

"It is a comfortable temperature for us. You will get used to it."

He had dropped her into his thoughts without a stitch of fabric on. Her breasts swelled gently in the water and she bent her knees slightly when they approached the edge of the pool and she found herself exposed.

The white flash of his teeth in the darkness indicated he caught her small movement. "No need to hide from me. In this plane, I have already seen everything there is to see."

"Yeah, well, it doesn't have to be out on display." She took up a position on the stone ledge at the edge of the pool. The rippling water covered her body.

"Why ever not?" The amusement was heavy in his tone. "By the way, your body glows in the



darkness. I could see you even if you hid under a rock."

She sighed and slumped, letting the water rock her into relaxation. "Wonderful and you are so dark, you could hide in the shadows and if you don't smile or open your eyes, I wouldn't know you were there."

"It is a handy design for the dream riders." He shrugged.

"So, are you sure it is safe to be out here with the shuttle basically unoccupied?"

"Yes, I am sure. Any alarms will instantly bring me awake and I will bring you with me."

"Good to know."

He turned her so that her back was to him and he started to administer a massage that she would have killed for back on earth.

"Why do you keep doing that?"

His lips were next to her ear when he whispered, "Doing what?"

"You touch me, a lot."

"I have spent centuries asleep, waiting for another being who fits me in every way. Now that you are here in front of me, I can hardly believe it. Touching you is my way of reassuring me while getting you used to my touch." He pressed soft kisses along her neck and shoulders.

She shivered, her nipples pebbling beneath the water.

His massage continued, pausing only when he murmured, "The first jump."

Valeria let him touch her, running his hands down all of her limbs in turn as he took in her entire body one inch at a time.

When he ran his hand over her breasts, she pressed her hand to the back of his and steered him to the most sensitive spots. A light touch under her breast made her shake while a firm scraping of his calloused fingers across her nipples had her whimpering.

Her other hand paired with his and led him to the soft skin of her lower belly and circled her clit slowly with his long and elegant fingers.

Her cries grew more breathy and she moaned in a rapidly increasing crescendo until her cries echoed on the cavern roof.

When he lifted her from the pool in a rush of water, she stared into the darkness as he turned her to face the floor and pressed her belly to the cool stones.

His cock slid along her slit until it caught and he pressed forward. She groaned and pressed back, using her hands.

Morpheus pinned her in place with his hand and stroked into her slowly until she was twitching and writhing with every slide and shove.

The sound of bodies slapping together with wet flesh reverberated in the room as he picked up the

tempo, his hips striking the backs of her buttocks with every slick thrust.

His roar of satisfaction shook the room and as he slumped onto her body, he licked and sucked at the back of her neck.

“Cold. Put me back in the water.” Her body was still throbbing with energy, but she wasn’t going to force him to see it through.

Morpheus fell back and dragged her with him, slipping into the water like a sea creature and placing her back on the seat while he stretched his phantom muscles.

Val yelped in shock as he parted her thighs beneath the water and applied his mouth to her body in a slowly lapping stroke. Her orgasm came on in a rush. Her shriek of surprise was only partially muffled by her hand. The other hand was trying to claw its way into the poolside.

He surged free of the water and kissed her, his taste mingled with hers and she threaded her fingers through his hair to hold his mouth to hers.

He broke the kiss for a moment. “Second jump. Third jump.”

She shivered. “That seems really fast.”

“We have been in here for hours. It just seems fast to you because you are in my mind and not your own. All of your normal registers are missing.”

She nodded and pulled his head back down.

“Don’t care. Let me know when we are at Admar.”

With his lips less than a millimetre from hers, he whispered, “I will. I want to try this in the flesh one day.”

## CHAPTER SEVEN

“Morpheus, if you don’t answer, we are going to blast that shuttle out of the sky.” The voice was feminine and irritated, but it had a mechanical tone.

Val stumbled back to the pilot’s seat as Morpheus answered the voice. “Aissa, I am here and my journey was successful.”

“Great, maybe next time you could be a little quicker on the com, I need to power down the weapons systems now.” The pout was audible.

“Valeria, this is Aissa, the guardian of Admar while we slept. Also known as the great computer.” He was smiling as he looked at her.

Val was dazed from the activity her mind had been wrenched from. On the dream plane, she had an ability to hold her breath that Morpheus had been appreciating when the voice and proximity alarms had announced their arrival.

“Are you going to go straight to your place, Morpheus? Or stopping at the city first?” Aissa

asked.

"Straight to our home, please. The others can visit us there after we get some sleep and a good meal." His tone didn't indicate that he had been inches away from release when they were jarred out of their dreams and Val had to admit his composure was impressive.

"Beacon is activated. You have two hours to land and then you are on your own. Welcome to Admar, Valeria."

"Thank you, Aissa. It is nice to meet you."

The chortle was almost human.

"I guess when the *your place or mine* subject comes up, we are going to yours." She set the shuttle on the beacon's signal and they rode along the beam until a landing strip in the centre of a mist-shrouded valley welcomed the shuttle.

Eager and energized with the feel of real gravity under her feet, she ran out into the cool air of the valley. Giggling with glee, she flung herself down onto the grass and rolled over and over down the groove of the nearest hillock.

She rocked to a halt on her stomach and enjoyed the scent of the fresh green grass. Boots halted an inch from her face.

"I am guessing you are pleased with the location?"

She rolled to her back and looked up the line of his thighs, across his chest to the ruby eyes that

were watching her with caution in his gaze.

"I have spent a lot of time on stations. There is nothing like the feeling of earth under my feet, even if it is Admar and not Terra."

"It is currently under your spine. Come along, I will show you your new home." He held out his hands and she took them, letting him lift her to her feet.

They walked hand in hand to the building she had seen in her mind. It got larger as they approached, until the huge double doors were only inches in front of her nose. They swung open soundlessly and everything was as she had seen it in his dreams. "Your imagination is really spot on."

"Years of practice. There is also a lift here. We need not take the stairs every day if you don't wish to."

"Where is it?" Nothing inside the public area was touched by time. It may have been empty, but it was well maintained and dry as a bone.

"That wall, there." He showed her how to activate the crystal that would bring the lift and a small bot made her jump as it rolled out when the doors opened.

"What the heck?"

"A maintenance bot. There were tens of thousands of them when we went to sleep. Only a few hundred are in working shape. It is a good

thing that we have begun to wake.” He shepherded her into the small room and as the doors closed, the bot waved cheerful arms at them, then turned and trundled off.

The drop was almost imperceptible, but they were soon at the lower level and he was escorting her down the hall. “The bathing rooms are to your left, common areas to the right and our chambers are this way.”

“Our chambers, huh?” Val squinted at him.

“You are much more malleable on the dream plane.” He sighed and wrapped an arm around her waist.

“I am not worried about personal injury or lasting damage while on the dream plane. Here in person, you seem bigger than you do in my mind.” She shrugged.

They reached his quarters and the door opened at their approach. “I promise to do nothing to make you uncomfortable. Should you be willing, our first time will be entirely within your control.”

Val nodded and swallowed heavily at the sight of the bed, neatly made with dark sheets and pillows. She concentrated on the Masuo under her clothing and began to feel a little better. It was superficial, but confidence in the bedroom for Val came out of her lingerie.

She grabbed Morpheus’s hand before she could change her mind and dragged him to the bed.



“Strip.”

He blinked his deep red eyes for a moment and then moved his hands to the closure of his tunic.

She bit her lower lip as he exposed delineated muscle that bunched and rippled as he moved. It wasn't quite human, but it was fun to watch. She pressed her thighs together as he sat to remove his boots. He stood to remove his trousers and she almost passed out as the pulse between her thighs took on a heady tone.

He was fully and achingly aroused. Her body went into a riot. Her womb clenched and rushed with moisture while her mouth watered. She swallowed heavily and then ordered, “Sit.”

He sat and waited for her. She moved before she could change her mind.

Her dress with its small grass smudges flew over her head and dropped to the floor in a flutter of fabric.

His eyes widened and she could swear she saw his cock jerk at the brilliant blue bands encasing her skin at almost random intervals from breast to thigh. The Masuo snaked down her thighs to form high-heeled shoes that tilted her hips and caused her to thrust her breasts out.

She walked toward him and placed her hands on his shoulders, kissing him with savage intensity while she worked her knees to either side of his hips.

He leaned up to meet her, tangling his tongue with hers after laving and nipping at her jawline. His hands caressed the contrast of her skin and the Masuo bands, shaking slightly as she let the Masuo move down to her thighs in a set of stockings and garters. He followed the trail of the clothing, tracking it and enjoying circling the thigh band from all angles.

She was so wet, she was shaking and Val reached down to circle his cock with one hand while lowering herself onto the wide head with a slow and steady motion. Her kisses on his mouth turned to bites as she rose and fell, taking him more deeply with each plunge as he widened her with the rigid bar of flesh inside her.

When she was down as far as she could go, she gripped his shoulders again and began to rise and fall in a fast rhythm. Her breath came in gasps as his hands gripped her hips and helped to speed her beat.

The friction drew her closer and closer to the peak and when her muscles started to lock, he took over pulling her onto him with a hard smacking beat until she screamed and dug her nails into his skin.

Her body flared like a nova, heat poured through every cell as pleasure burned along every nerve.

Morpheus didn't allow her respite but rolled her

to her back and thrust furiously until he roared his own release. Sweat covered them both.

He rolled to his side and cuddled her against him. "Definitely not a dream."

She chuckled weakly. "I can tell."

He used all of his remaining energy to cock an eyebrow. "How?"

"We don't get this sweaty in the dream state. Nor is there residue in the air."

He chuckled. "Ah, there is that."

She tried to come up with another topic for conversation, but sleep seemed the better option. She was on a world that reminded her of home with a man who had the ability to haunt her dreams. She embraced the coming darkness with an enthusiasm that made her smile.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

**T**he high-pitched laughter of a child woke Valeria with a jerk.

Morpheus left the lav towelling his hair dry. "That would be the firstborn. Demira. Apparently, they didn't want to wait for us to go to them."

Val clothed herself with the Masuo in seconds. No sense scarring the little one for life. "Demira?"

"The child of the sleeper, Demetrius, and your champion, Sarah." He removed clothing for himself from the wardrobe and smiled. "They have provided clothing for you."

With delight, she bounded from the bed and almost collapsed. Her inner thighs didn't want to tense enough to hold her weight.

"Yeah, psychic sex is definitely different than the real thing."

She wanted to punch him.

Morpheus was fighting a grin.

"Pick something for me. I am grabbing a proper shower."

Inside the lav, she sighed happily at the familiar layout. She shrunk the Masuo to an anklet and stepped under the shower. The water flowed over her with a heated familiarity that unknotted her shoulders and relaxed her thighs.

She scrubbed at her hair until it loosened and all the grass was gone. The soap was clear and left her skin with the smooth and shiny gloss that Morpheus's had. The shampoo had a conditioner in it that left her blonde locks soft and silky. Clean and feeling almost human for the first time in months, she dried off and let the Masuo flow into a short slip.

Her hair fluffed up slightly as she towelled it and she pattered back into the bedroom to accept the dress that Morpheus handed her while watching the bots make the bed. "Look. Teeny butlers."

A feminine chuckle from behind her made her turn as she settled a medieval-style gown over her hips. "Hello, Valeria. I am Sarah. This is Tess. Oh, and this is Demira."

The baby strapped to the front of the woman speaking waved her arms and legs, her chubby limbs as dark as Morpheus's while her hair was a glowing shock of white.

He went up to the little one and shook her tiny hand. "Nice to see you again, small one."

"Unkie Morpheus is going to leave us alone for

a minute. Isn't he?"

The other woman came forward and hugged Valeria. "Welcome to Admar, Valeria. I am Tess, mated to Vere. You will eventually see a few elves that don't look like they are made of midnight, but their race focussed on being underground for so long that the jet skin is about half of their population."

The woman was smiling and cheerful, but there was a calm behind her eyes that spoke of trauma overcome.

Morpheus gave her a quick peck on the cheek and walked out of the room, leaving her with the two humans and the teeny Admaryn.

Sarah gestured to the table in the corner and took a seat. Tess sat next to Val and the three women sat there for a moment. "Dehlia would be here, but she isn't too mobile right now. She could go into labour any minute and Taneus isn't letting her out of his sight."

"I appreciate the visit, but why are you here?" Val cocked her head and admired the embroidery on the cuff of her gown.

"Sarah is here to make sure that Morpheus didn't use any underhanded methods to keep you here. By the Admar Proxy, he is allowed to hunt and bring forth a mate from the Terran volunteers, but we want to make sure that you are not being held in any kind of thrall or with hypnotic

suggestion."

"That is very kind of you, Reader Marks. But I am here of my own free will."

Sarah smiled and extended her hand. "Humour me."

Val really didn't want to touch the reader, but there was steel in those eyes and Tess had a grim certainty to her own gaze as well. She wasn't getting out of here until Sarah knew her secrets.

She pressed two fingers lightly into Sarah's palm and watched her eyes flick rapidly as she breathed and absorbed the images of Val's life. Tears coursed down her cheeks and Sarah squeezed her hand tightly as she sniffled.

Demira was playing with a butter knife on the table and had no idea that her mother was having a little breakdown above her.

Tess looked worried, casting looks between them. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing. Morpheus has behaved in a very gentlemanly manner, considering the circumstances and our new addition is one tough cookie. Perhaps when she is more relaxed, we can see her manipulate the Masuo she was given." Sarah inhaled and dashed the tears from her eyes. "Would you care to visit Dehlia?"

"Sure, whose vehicle do we take?" She got to her feet and made her shoes match the trim on the gown.

"We have rigged a few direct underhill portals between settlements so that we can keep in touch more easily. Dehlia came up with a filament support structure that does wonderfully well." Sarah fished her baby out of the carrier and handed her to Val.

Looking down into bright red eyes under the shock of white hair and brows was surprisingly soothing. She shifted the baby to her hip and nodded to Sarah and Tess. "Lead the way."

The portal room was off the main hall and with a hand swipe for activation, it opened directly into a sun-drenched patio where a woman heavy with advancing pregnancy struggled to weave.

The men had come with them, Demetrius and Vere sharing colouring with the little elf Val was still carrying. The baby went nuts when she saw Dehlia and she stood away from her loom with a smile. "Hey, munchkin. How is my little princess today?"

Holding the girl became awkward, so Val moved toward the new face with a smile. "Hello, I am Valeria."

"Dehlia. Welcome to Admar."

"I have been getting that a lot."

Dehlia took the small, squirming bundle and cuddled her against heavily swollen breasts. The little one stilled immediately and started a



non-stop line of chatter.

“Come inside. Demetrius warned us to expect visitors, so there is a light lunch on.” She moved slowly but carefully as she lumbered with the baby into the home.

Taneus was the first blond elf that Val had seen, aside from Fenn. The two bore a startling similarity to each other. He helped his wife to sit, not even trying to pry the happily burbling infant from her.

Bots with trays on their heads whirled into the seating area and Val took the hint, sitting next to Morpheus while Vere pulled Tess onto his lap. Demetrius sat next to Sarah, but he took her hand and the occasional flick of a lid indicated that she was receiving information or communication from him.

The group chatted about the weather, the bots engaged in harvesting and Aissa.

“How did your people create a living computer with emotions and everything?” Val was on her second glass of cider and felt distinctly mellow with the security of her fellow Terrans and the Admaryn around her.

Demetrius looked to the other males and they all shrugged. “Well, when it was determined that we give up our world and leave the sleepers behind to restart a new race blended with the one we tried to destroy, we needed a caretaker. We needed a computer with the mind of someone who

wanted nothing but good for all of the sleepers and the new mates coming to our world.

"Auditions were held and extensive interviews were given to the women and men who were willing to give up their physical form to become one with Admar. Aissa was the only one to pass all of the screening processes. She was a very level-headed, two-hundred-year-old healer with a family background in matchmaking and a degree in mathematics. Her nurturing instincts were powerful, but she would never be able to have children of her own due to our dwindling abilities to procreate.

"She is highly manipulative, but every action she carries out is designed to bring us closer to waking all of the sleepers."

Val had to ask, "What will happen to her when you are all awake?"

"She will shut down and remain dormant until she is needed again." Demetrius shrugged.

"Fabulous. Can't we fix her up with a nice nebula or something?" Dehlia asked.

"She is Admar. There is no one else to maintain the passive systems, the crops, harvests and the reviving of old species."

Val didn't like that, she didn't like it one bit, but she held her tongue. The rest of the afternoon passed in a blur as Dehlia explained that her water had just broken and could they get her to her

room.

Taneus was on his feet and lifting her in an instant. Demira was returned to her parents and as if she knew what was going on, she didn't make a fuss.

Val was fascinated. She could actually see the contractions of the muscles across the abdomen.

"Dehlia, do you want us in here, or should we go?"

"Stay! I want everybody here, the guys can look out the window or something, but we didn't have a chance to get the midwife paperwork filled out. Someone is catching this baby and it isn't me." The last was said on a groan as her body twisted with pain.

"Taneus, get the blanket and the shawl from the other room, as well as my bag of string. I have enough healing piled into those items that I should be able to turn inside out and still recover."

With that pleasant image, Val stepped up, "I'll get it." She sprinted into the room Taneus quickly directed her to and left him to deal with his moaning wife.

She retrieved the items and smiled. They hummed with power. The strings made her hands tingle and just to be on the safe side, she grabbed a scissors. She skidded into the room and placed the scissors on the table while the rest of the fabric went to Taneus.

He wrapped the shawl around Dehlia's shoulders and she sighed as comfort flowed through her. The blanket was folded next to her legs and when the father-to-be flipped up her skirt, he sat up with his eyes wide. "This is too fast."

"Shut up and catch it, moron. I have been in labour since last night." Dehlia groaned and her son slid into his father's hands.

Val clung to Morpheus's hand and blinked in shock at the tiny little person who had suddenly joined them. Sure, it was an inevitable conclusion to a lot of sex if both partners were fertile and healthy, but to see him with his little arms and legs waving in the air was just too precious.

"What is it?"

Taneus had tears in his eyes. "A son, love. A little boy."

"You are naming him then. I will name the girls." Dehlia picked up the blanket and gestured for her son. As she wrapped him in the blanket, his umbilical cord, tied with her hand-spun threads, dropped off. He was perfect and ready to go.

"Tanor. To keep the naming tradition going." He winked at Demetrius and the men shared a smile.

All the couples in the room were leaning together, holding each other as the moment washed over them.

When Dehlia started to push again, Taneus

grew alarmed. "Dehlia, what are you doing?"

"Producing a brother or sister. Twins are common in my family, didn't I tell you?" She grunted and Tess took Tanor while Val slipped out again to capture the second blanket she had left behind.

She had thought nothing of it, many women prepared like mad before their babies were born.

Val skidded back into the room just as the second blonde head appeared. "Whoa."

"No whoa. No stop. No slowing down." Dehlia gritted her teeth and pushed with each contraction. Her daughter entered the world a moment later.

"Now a little girl. We are doubly blessed."

"Cordelia Emily. Named after my grandmother." Sweat beaded her brow as she lay back in the pillows, but as the afterbirth made their appearance, Dehlia's healing fibres did their job. Her flesh knit back together in under ten minutes.

"Can you watch the new arrivals while I grab a shower?"

Taneus gave his daughter to Valeria and sighed as he turned back to his wife. "This is a lot of drama for a birth. Did you need an audience?"

He lifted her and carried her into the bathing room. "I didn't need an audience, but they are as close as we have to family. Now there is more family, they needed to be here." She sounded tired, but as the door closed, the rest of them were left,

each couple holding an infant.

Demira started to babble and the newborns waved their small hands in response.

Val smiled down at little Cordelia. "Look at her tiny ears. They are so pointy."

The elves in the room gave her indulgent smiles while the Terrans laughed. "I know. I just can't get over Demira's little ears."

The bots came in, cleaned the bedding, removing the soiled sheets and put new ones on in a fascinating dance of flipping and twirling.

Dehlia was looking much better as she was tucked into bed and her new babies were placed in her arms.

Tess spoke softly. "Vere and I will stay to help if you need it."

Sarah nodded. "And we can get a home in the city ready for you if you wish, just until they are weaned."

Dehlia smiled tiredly. "Taneus and I will discuss our options, but for now, thank you Tess. The guestroom is ready. As for the city, I will think about it. Just from a socializing standpoint, I know it would be better, but I can't plan anything now."

They nodded.

"Sorry I didn't volunteer, but I don't know anything about babies, aside from that they are small and wiggly." Val shrugged and Morpheus hid his face in her hair, smiling.

"It's all right, Valeria. You are new here and you need time to adjust. Just come and visit and I will be happy." Dehlia gave out a jaw-cracking yawn and waved her hand. "Shoo. I will see you all soon."

They filed out one by one, kissing the little ones and their mother on the way out.

Back at the dream riders' structure, Val hugged Morpheus. "That was wonderful. I am so happy for her."

"Do you want children of your own?" His voice took on that dark, honeyed tone that she loved to hear.

"When the time is right. It hasn't been up until now, but I think with a stable place to live, a proper home and a father who is willing to stick around, it may be a possibility." She smiled into his chest. They were back in their chambers and both fully clothed.

"I will have to engage in a regimen of convincing you then. Where shall I begin?" His hands were stroking her spine and pulling her flush against him. Her softness against his muscle.

"Begin where you like, I trust you." Her whisper said it all, she trusted him. To save her, not to hurt her, to protect her and to be there for her when she needed him.

Her past was past. It may flare up, but he was

willing to deal with it and his willingness itself held more charm than she had used in her whole career.

As he knelt in front of her and lifted her gown up and over her head, she felt a settling of tranquility inside her. This was right and galaxies away from Terra, she was home.



## **AUTHOR'S NOTE**

Okay, I confess, in this one, I was all over the map. We visited the evil raiders of *Enthralled*, spent time with *Spinner*, went all the way back to *Marks of Admar*...and then things got weird.

With the Sector Guard, I brought in characters from *Resurrecting Flame*, *Guarding Pax*, *Armed and Armoured* and *Celestial Storm*. Each one a woman of power who had her man wrapped around her finger.

I love this series and it just keeps getting weirder and more entangled.

Thanks for reading,

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## **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.