



MARK ALDERS

HOPE OF THE SPIRIT

PEMBROKE EVE CHRONICLES

Jacob, Callum and Zane are desperate to rescue Mr. Barnaby from the eternal realm and possible possession by one of the time vampires. That means traveling through a portal once more... something that didn't go all that well the first time.

Unfortunately for Jacob and all of his friends, the only key to Mr. Barnaby's saviour is in the haunted lighthouse far out in the rough waters of Pembroke Bay. A place where legend says those who venture never come back. What's more, not only is the town of Pembroke Eve at stake, but the lives of every person on the planet hang in the balance as the eternal put into place their plan to take over the human realm. Yes, the eternal want power, but they're pissed off as well, having lost hope of taking over the dragon realm, thanks to Jacob and his friends.

Meanwhile, Aloysius and Suzy must hold the fort at home, looking after both the General store and the Food Emporium. After all, a shipment of noodles at a bargain price has just hit town and who else will hold back the crowd in Mr. Barnaby's absence while Jacob, Callum and Zane go rescue him?

Sure, Jacob may be a king and the younger brother of powerful dragon, but can he and those he loves survive long enough in the lighthouse to discover the key they need? Or will they become the next victims of the curse of the lighthouse?

The gang are in for the fight of their lives this time...with unexpected results.

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Hope of the Spirit
The Pembroke Eve Chronicles 5

By

Mark Alders

Dedication

For my Family

Chapter One

Yes, I'm Jacob Theison, town saviour and killer of eternal and dragons, but those fancy titles didn't help when it came time to save Mr. Barnaby. He had fallen into the realm of the eternal, or time vampires as I call them. And now, with everything I had within me, including my last breath, I was going to get him back.

I glanced out of the passenger side window, feeling forlorn. Zane was driving. The road we travelled was leaf-littered and one of those perfect picture-postcard style country roads calendar photographers die for. To me it was just like any other in this part of Pembroke Eve that cut through the Westfell forest and headed toward the Pacific Ocean.

The lighthouse was our goal.

Zane slowed the car. Was he nervous? I sure was. In fact, I felt decidedly uncomfortable in my own clothes. Then again, I had spent the last two days naked in a sweltering jungle surrounded by beautiful dragon people. Perhaps I had become

used to wearing nothing and now that I had jeans and a T-shirt on I felt restricted. I pulled at the cloth near my groin in emphasis to my thoughts.

My nervousness became more apparent. Butterflies rose up in my stomach when I saw the signpost, *Pembroke Bay Lighthouse one kilometre*. Underneath those words, scratched into the sign was, *visitors beware*.

Callum leaned over from the back seat and patted me on my shoulder. I understood what he was doing and I appreciated it. He must have felt the same. I turned so I could kiss him, take in his warmth and taste to help reassure me.

"Hey, save some of that for me, too," Zane said with a chuckle, but one filled with nerves.

It was great how a few words spoken by Zane and Callum's wonderful touch eased any tension I might have had. I mean, it was silly believing in stories made up by drunks with an overactive imagination, wasn't it? Why would folk disappear when they went to the lighthouse? Probably went and got themselves drowned more like it and their mates yabbered on in the town pub about ghosts to try and convince both themselves and others that they hadn't been stupid. That's how folklore began, I'm sure.

Then again, I thought that about aliens...and zombies and dragons and...awww, fuck. We were in deep shit, weren't we? The sight of a darkening

sky and leaves eddying around us like an unexpected wind had kicked them up, greeted us when we pulled into the lighthouse's boatshed. That feeling of nerves returned with vengeance when the man who obviously ferried folk back and forth from the mainland to the lighthouse island stepped up to the car and banged on my window.

I flicked the switch to roll the window down.

"What you young pups doing here this time of day?" he asked, his voice as craggy as the rocks at the shoreline. "I was just about to head home and get me some supper."

I glanced at the car's dash. It was mid-afternoon, just after four. "We want to visit the lighthouse, sir," I offered, my voice somewhat feeble. Why? Well, we really didn't have a reason to be doing such a thing. Were visitors allowed? Or were there only certain times where someone could go to the lighthouse?

The old man, beard as white and wiry as I had ever seen, glared at me through eyes that reflected the years of his life, deep set and intense. For the longest while an awkward silence filled my ears, doing nothing to ease the butterflies that activated in my stomach again.

Finally, Zane said, "We won't be long. Just need to find somethin' and then we'll be on our way."

The man licked his lips, then said, "I've already

packed the boat away. Come back tomorrow."

He was about to walk away, when I opened to car door and got out. "Please, mister, it's a matter of life and death. Mr. Barnaby said for us to come here to find something for him."

"Lionel?"

"Yeah, that's right."

Again, he did a lot of that staring thing before he added, "You young pups will have to help me get the boat out. And it'll be a one-way trip. I have to think of my dear Mabel. She'll be livid if I'm late home, especially as it's steak and chip night. So get it into your heads that I don't have time to wait for you lot, you hear?"

"But you'll come for us in the morning, won't you?" I asked.

He nodded and offered a crooked smile. "Staying the night'll put hairs on your young chests, but yes, I'll be back for you at first light."

By now Callum and Zane had come beside me.

"Did he say we have to stay the night in the lighthouse, Jacob?" Callum questioned. "But...but what about a change of clothes and stuff? I thought we'd be in and out in an hour at the most. We're not prepared for this."

I understood where Callum was coming from. I didn't fancy a stay in a creepy lighthouse either, but if we were to get there and find this so-called key, I didn't see any other choice. He was right

about one thing, we weren't really prepared, not at all. I mean, we didn't bring any food for a start. What were we going to eat tonight besides each other's cocks? My loins stirred. I then changed my train of thought. Perhaps staying in a *haunted* lighthouse would be fun. I know being there with Zane and Callum would be interesting to say the least. We couldn't keep our hands off each other, even when chased by dragons and zombies and God knows what else. So why would this situation be any different?

The old man let out a rasping chuckle, but not one filled with amusement, more impatience. "There's a big bed on the top floor bedroom. Sleep top to tail in your long johns, that's how we did it in the army. Nothing wrong with that."

Zane piped up, "I ain't sleepin' with men. What you think, I'm some sort of fag or somethin'?" The cheeky sneer on his lips and the nudge in my side more than gave away the fact that he was just being facetious. God, he was fucking hot. He even did that cheeky smile thing that drove me crazy.

Callum decided to emulate Zane and offer his own brand of tongue-in-cheek humour, too. "Besides, if I was going to get in the sack with blokes I'd pick ones far better looking than these two."

Zane laughed, coming around to embrace him. "Good one, Cals."

I couldn't help but get involved. The mood turned joyful and light considering the drive to the lighthouse was dominated by my dark thoughts. I'm sure the old man must have thought we were clinging onto sanity by the barest thread. "Yeah, and not only that, they've got such small dicks, too."

"Fuck, I'll show you a small dick. Gag you with the fucker, too," Zane said, laughing merrily and slipping his hand into mine.

I kissed Zane. Then I kissed Callum. Then they kissed each other. I was glad I was with them right now. I don't think I could have stayed the night in a lighthouse alone, haunted or otherwise.

A look of puzzlement had stained the old man's face. "There's food in the kitchen. Mostly canned stuff. I'll turn on the generator for you so you can cook and have some light. Best I can do." I took it from his words that he had decided not to encourage us anymore. He roved his gaze over us. We were all hand in hand. "I'll never understand you young pups, but if you're a friend of Lionel, then I'll help you. Come on, let's get this boat out before I change my mind and the sea gets too rough to make the trip."

To say the ocean was rough was the understatement of the century. I think I knew why folk got lost. They never made it to the lighthouse in the first place. The old man's boat was small,

felt even more insignificant by the waves that towered over us.

The distance to the lighthouse was no more than a hundred metres, but at many points in the journey I couldn't even see land, neither the shore nor the island the lighthouse nested upon.

"The sea's angry today," the old man offered, screaming over the noise of the ocean against the bow of the boat. "Even the gulls are silent."

I didn't offer any reply. Was he attempting to justify the terrible trip to the lighthouse? We were all soaked to the bone. Callum's words of not having any spare clothing rang in my mind. Yep. We were ill-prepared. Sure, the man had given us thin plastic raincoats, but they offered no protection from the maelstrom we sailed into. How could they? Water was everywhere.

Zane looked green and had to lean over the side a couple of times. Callum and I comforted him, but when the seas were heaving this much, no amount of comfort was going to help. He threw up his guts.

"Really angry," the old man reiterated. He had turned on the bilge pump engine and now that noise added to the deafening and *angry* sea around us.

I was in hell.

"We're coming to the lighthouse," Callum yelled out.

Another problem presented itself. The rocks on which the lighthouse was built were even more craggy and sharp than those on the mainland. Yes, there was a jetty and stairs cut out of the island, but how the fuck were we going to moor in conditions like this?

Chapter Two

The old man was a master at sailing. He brought the boat in without so much as a lift of his eyebrows or a smirk of worry on his lips. Then again, it did help that the water on the landward side of the lighthouse island was a lot calmer than that in the open ocean. The jetty also happened to be in a sort of alcove. Yes, the sea was still rough, but not to prevent us from getting off the boat.

With a lot of hand holding and grabbing onto the railings, all four of us made it off the boat. The old man secured the vessel while Zane, Callum and I went up the stairs, no mean feat considering how slippery the stone steps were. The ascent took a lot longer than I would have hoped, but we got there.

The lighthouse was as ominous as a building could be, the building made of dark grey bricks that looked stark against the white angry foam of the sea around us. I couldn't see many windows, and those that were visible were tiny. I imagined inside would be dark and miserable, perhaps

another reason why legends of the building being haunted came about. Who knows?

Callum hadn't let go of my hand since we left the boat. His grip got tighter and tighter the closer we got to the lighthouse. And believe me, I understood. This shit was scary as all fuck. Zane led the way, making sure everything was all right before we followed. I tripped once or twice, as did Callum. On numerous occasions Zane shouted at us to watch our step.

We reached the front door of the lighthouse. The old man had caught us up and any remnants of his pleasant demeanour had long been washed away like any sign of life on the rock we had found ourselves on. The air was thick with the moisture of the sea and I felt a chill run down my spine when Zane tested the doorhandle. The door creaked open, darkness lay beyond.

"Hey, it's not locked," Zane said, stating the obvious. Somehow him saying such a thing added more to the tension brewing inside me. My stomach turned. Callum's grip became so tight I couldn't feel my fingers.

"I'll go turn on the generator so you young pups can get warm. There's plenty of heating ducts around the place. You'll be snug as bugs in no time. Oh, there are also spare blankets in the linen cupboard next to the kitchen. Make yourselves at home."

"But why don't you just wait for us?" Callum asked, pulling me toward the old man and away from the open door. "I mean, we might not be long at all."

The old man's face screwed up and what I could only describe as a worried smile crossed his withered lips. "Because what you seek won't be easy to find, trust me." And with that he turned and disappeared out of sight beyond the lighthouse.

A few moments later, with a crackle and a pop, the darkness beyond the door illuminated. The power was on.

"I take it we're here for the night then," Zane said, stepping into the lighthouse proper. If I didn't know any better, I would say he was enjoying himself.

I turned to look back at the land we had left and the ocean between us. The old man was descending the stairs, heading for his boat. Yep. We were here for the night. I wonder what he meant by us not being able to find the key so easily? Was it hidden? How were we supposed to find it then?

Callum moaned when I gently pulled him so I could get out of the miserable weather. I was soaked. My fringe was plastered to my forehead and I had to wipe my eyes many times. One thing was certain, the flimsy plastic raincoats we had

been given didn't keep out the weather all that well. Not at all.

We stepped into a foyer, a pendant light with a low wattage bulb flickered overhead, offering just enough light to see by. There was a strange musty smell that hung thick in the air, like mothballs and damp and something else I couldn't describe all mixed in. Zane had removed his raincoat. He was soaked, his clothes stained dark by the waves and resulting spray that had engulfed us while we were on the open ocean.

"S'pose we get all naked so we can give our clothes a chance to dry then." Zane's flicker of a smile reflected the small spark of his cheekiness he held onto even in trying conditions. I couldn't help but smile back in reply. He was wonderful, such a free spirit, such a beautiful person with an infectious personality. I was glad right down to the pit of my soul I was here with him and Callum.

"Can we just get on with finding the key first, okay?" The tone of Callum's voice and the fact he was opening cupboard doors and drawers looking for something made it evident he was both scared and impatient. I couldn't blame him. The gloomy atmosphere inside the lighthouse bred such feelings. Shadows were deep and long and my imagination had run away with me on a couple of occasions. I thought I caught a glimpse of

movement between the furniture that populated the foyer. I dismissed such thoughts. Probably rats or something.

"I think you're both right," I offered, rather diplomatically and to take my mind off any negative thoughts. I mean, they *were* right. The last thing I needed was tension between us, especially in this place. "We do need to get out of these wet clothes *and* find the key as soon as possible."

My words must have calmed Callum. He embraced me, kissed me with such tenderness I didn't want him to let go. "I think Zane's probably more right," he said.

"Hey, I thought you said we were ugly," Zane said with a chuckle. He also came over to embrace us, his arms pulling us toward him. He pecked me on my lips, his touch wet and hot, between lavishing kisses onto Callum as well.

"I didn't say there was anything wrong with ugly," Callum said. He and Zane then pasted, glimpses of their tongues touching in the dim light sent shivers of delight through me. I was surrounded by the gentle sound of their passion and the warmth of their touch. If this was ugly, I couldn't wait for beautiful.

An eternity later, or so it seemed, we finished our kisses, ones done more for reassurance than anything. No matter what came our way, we were strong together, our feelings solidifying that

strength. I was ready for anything. I was ready to find the key and help get Mr. Barnaby back. I believed they were ready, too.

Then again, was this key even a real key? I shrugged my shoulders and removed my raincoat once Zane and Callum let me go. I hung it on the hat stand near the front door. Zane had taken off most of his clothes, as had Callum. They were happy to parade around in nothing else but their underwear. I went a step further. I took off everything. Somehow being naked felt more natural and more comfortable than being restricted, especially after visiting the dragon realm. Showing off my tattoo garland gave me a thrill.

Besides, the air was rather warm. More so than I would have thought considering the generator had only just been turned on. Actually, when I followed Zane into the room beyond the foyer, I couldn't help but think that the lighthouse must have a furnace or boiler underneath it. I could hear all sorts of clunking and hissing noises through the walls. But there was also something else. Something I couldn't quite put my finger on. Again, I shrugged off such thoughts. We had work to do and thinking such things didn't achieve anything.

Callum was carrying our wet clothes so he couldn't hold my hand. I bet if he were, he'd be

gripping me tight right about now. We came into a kitchen. Again the lighting wasn't the best. What was it with such weak bulbs in this place? Hadn't the old man thought about replacing them with stronger ones? Anyway, the kitchen's pantry was fully stocked as the old man had said it would be. My first clue to that fact was Zane's smile when he opened the doors to the larder. Sure, it looked like there were only cans on the shelves, but hey, food was food. And I had to admit, now that we had reassured each other with our sensual kisses, my hunger became apparent. My stomach grumbled.

Callum reiterated my thoughts with the next words out of his mouth. "You know, seeing as we're going to be here all night, I think we should eat before we begin searching the place...right?"

"Sure," I said.

I watched him place our clothes neatly over a couple of chairs scattered about the kitchen. When that was done, he moved them toward a large grating over by the far wall. I assumed that's how the place got so warm so quick, the grating directing the heat into the rooms from the furnace below. I was glad I had nothing on. I think Callum and Zane were, too, because they had removed their boxers as well. Callum had placed them out to dry with everything else we owned. Seeing my beautiful men in all their glory sure was good for the soul. I smiled.

Zane returned to the larder, taking a couple of cans of ravioli off the shelf nearest to him. "My treat. I'll cook. But if I burn my cock 'cause I'm all naked while I'm near the stove, you both are so kissing it better."

I sat myself down at the old pine table that dominated the room as much as the old fashioned stove and sink. The place belonged in a museum, but I had to admit, it had a certain amount of charm about it, too. "If you burn yourself, I'll do much more than kiss it," I said, unable to contain the amusement his words gave me. I laughed.

Callum laughed, too. "I'd kiss it no matter what. You wouldn't even have to ask, Zane."

Zane pulled out a large iron pot from one of the cupboards. "You two are so going to get it later, you know that." But as he tried to ignite the stove with the longest match I had ever seen, Callum let out a cry.

I stood up, more out of reaction than anything. "What is it, baby?" My heart pounded loud in my chest and for a moment I thought I heard a scraping noise coming from within the ceiling. Or was it the floor above? The sound did remind me of someone moving furniture across wooden flooring. The light flickered. I had to take a minute to calm myself.

Callum's face had drained white and he had dropped my T-shirt onto the floor. "I saw...I saw

something move.”

“Where?” Zane interjected, his voice soaked with concern.

“Behind the heating grate there. I swear I saw something move and it didn’t look small to me. Honest.”

I went over to examine the grating. All I could see was darkness beyond the grill. “I believe you, Callum. But I’ve heard that rats can get real big near the sea. Maybe there’s a family living in the ducts or something and turning on the heating scared them a bit.” Then again, I didn’t know whether the words I spoke were to reassure myself or Callum. Perhaps it was a bit of both.

“Jakey’s right. These places get infested with all sorts of critters,” Zane added.

Callum nodded and his face softened. “I don’t know. I’m sure I saw something move that looked much bigger than a stupid rat.” He went to embrace Zane proper. “This place is giving me the creeps and we’ve only been here five minutes.”

I went to both my men and hugged them. “Don’t worry. Whatever was there, it’s gone now,” I said. Then, like we did in the foyer moments ago, we kissed each other deep. Again, my nervous tension was melted away by both my lovers’ touches. But I was curious. I wanted to know for sure whether the noises we heard and what Callum saw, was indeed made by rats or

something else. It was the something else that planted the seed of curiosity within me.

When I was engulfed by their passion, my feelings and thoughts soaked by their love, the hissing noises through the walls came back to the forefront of my attention. In amongst the sound, I heard a voice. A weak voice for sure, but I had no doubt. It was calling to me, my name clear amongst the babble of the furnace and clatter of piping.

Jacob. Jacob.

We weren't alone.

Chapter Three

I swallowed hard. I didn't know how I was going to break the news to Callum and Zane that I had heard my name being called out over and over. In the end, I decided not to say anything. Nothing had been proven. Not yet.

After we had all calmed each other and wolfed down the tinned ravioli Zane had prepared, I decided the time was right to start searching the lighthouse for the so-called key. Perhaps when we had got it and rescued Mr. Barnaby, we could relax and have a little fun. I was sure eager to get both Callum and Zane between the sheets. Seeing them naked, looking at their beautiful bodies and delicious cocks always did that to me.

Zane cleared our plates and was at the sink rinsing them off, when he said, "So you s'pose this key thingy is like, you know, a real one? Somethin' that maybe opens a weapons chest or somethin' like that? I'd so love to go kick some eternal's arse right now and make them suffer for taking Mister B away from us."

"I have a feeling it might be more like the ring Jacob gave me," Callum offered. "Perhaps it'll open a portal to a place that will show us how to help him or direct us to someone who can."

If the key could open a portal, why come to the lighthouse of all places? We could simply use the ring and be done with it. No. There was something more going on here. "Yeah, I think Zane's right. I bet the key is something that will help us fight the eternals," I added, more as an afterthought, realising all too late that I had spoken that thought out loud. I didn't want Callum to think I didn't respect his opinions, because I did.

Callum sighed, but didn't look hurt by my words. "I hope Zane's right, too, Jacob." He slid his hand over the table so he could hold mine. I gripped him tight. He looked worried again.

Zane got that grin of lust on his lips, the one he gave me before he ploughed me real good in that priest hole. The look, when I thought about it, was the same expression he offered when he ripped the heads off those insectmans. Fuck he was sexy. "I hope I'm fuckin' right, too. I could go for some good 'ol fashioned arse-kicking right about now. One way to let off some steam, hey?"

Callum must have had other things on his mind, besides violence or lust, and the next words he spoke happened to be the most profound I had

heard since we arrived at the lighthouse. "Have you heard the weird noises going on all around us? Talk about some freaky shit going on here. I swear I can hear someone calling out your name, Jacob. First there was that thing behind the grating and now this. And you can't tell me rats can talk."

Zane stopped what he was doing. I, too, had to admit my full attention was on Callum. I mean, someone had said it. Someone had confirmed what I feared anyway. I wasn't the only one who could hear my name amongst the hissing and clanging.

I got up off my chair. "Then I suggest we start looking." I offered Callum my hand and he accepted. I could see in his eyes the deep felt fear he was trying so hard to suppress. I couldn't really blame him. And he was right. There was something more than rats here.

Zane put away the cutlery and crockery we had used and before too long all three of us had left the kitchen and were heading up stairs to the next floor. The stairwell was a lot cooler than the heated rooms of the lighthouse, so I suggested we use the blankets from the linen cupboard to help keep us warm while we searched. I didn't know how many rooms had access to the heating and I didn't fancy putting on wet clothes.

"You both look so fuckin' hot in those blankets," Zane said. He patted me on my arse. I

turned to look at him and straight away I couldn't help but be immersed in that lustful grin he still had planted on his lips. I could also see that his body shared his desires, his cock was semi-hard and his foreskin glistened with pre-cum.

I was about to reply, offer some wonderfully cheeky retort, when Callum grabbed me tight. He said, "Fucking geez, did you guys see that?"

"See what?" I questioned. My stomach turned, and not from any pleasure I may have felt from having the two men I loved so close to me in the stairwell. I hated to admit, my attention was on Zane and not where we were going.

I hadn't seen anything. That's not to say nothing was there. In fact, there probably was. Shit, the whole situation was beginning to scare the spit out of me.

"That was definitely *not* a rat," Callum said, his grip around me bear-like. I struggled to breathe. Or was that because the whole situation had caused my nerves to take over and I was having trouble controlling my body's normal functions? Callum's grip just exacerbated the realisation that I was scared out of my mind.

Zane took the lead. "Well, we ain't gonna find out what's here by standin' on the steps holdin' each other's hands, now are we? Plenty of time for that. For now, let's just get this over and done with so I can rumple your foreskins in that big bed the

old dude spoke about earlier.”

I cracked a smile. One filled with both complete and utter admiration for Zane, and fear, my stomach churning at so many thoughts spinning around my mind. Was this place haunted, as rumours had said? Or was there something else going on here. I mean, why would Mr. Barnaby tell us to come here if there was danger? I mulled that last thought over for a moment.

My curiosity quelled some of the fear that had bubbled up within me. I let that trust I had for Mr. Barnaby fuel that inquisitiveness I had in abundance, too. After all, if there were ghosts in the lighthouse, who was to say they were evil? And what were ghosts anyway? Some folk say they are the souls of the dead trapped in this realm. I believe there’s something more to it. There had to be it. How was it Mr. Barnaby could communicate with us, like he was a ghost, when he wasn’t dead?

Callum let go, but grabbed my hand once more. We followed Zane, our heroic, knight in shining armour, up the stairs. Although, I had to say, watching his cute little butt wiggle while he walked, balls tantalising visible between his legs, made my curiosity morph into something far more tangible. That big bed sounded so appealing all of a sudden.

At the top of the stairs we came to a landing.

Again, the light offered nothing other than a glimpse of our surrounds. As with the foyer and the kitchen, the furniture should have been in a museum. Old heavy wooden cupboards and even an apothecary cabinet cluttered the landing. To the left a narrow hallway turned, obviously following the curve of the lighthouse. To the right there was a door.

Zane tested the handle. "It's locked."

"I thought the old man said to make ourselves at home. How can we if doors are locked?" Callum asked.

I could understand his concern, but at the same time, could relate to the disappointed look on Zane's face. I so wanted to know what was behind that door. Was the key in there? Was this all part of the *challenge*?

I found myself saying, "Why don't we try and force it open, then?"

Callum glared at me. "What if it's locked for a reason, Jacob?"

"Well then, why tell us to find something only to be confronted by a locked door? That's just begging for trouble, isn't it?"

"Jakey's right. I say bust it down." Zane let the blanket fall off his back. He stood there wearing an eager smile and nothing else. Then again, the room was quite warm. There must be one of those large heating ducts nearby, probably hidden

behind all the furniture.

Callum shrugged his shoulders. "Sure. But if an undead creature or whatever comes out to eat our brains or suck out our blood, don't blame me."

I embraced him. He smiled. I knew Callum. He could see that no matter how he felt about being here, especially with all these creepy noises and dark rooms, we were going to have to search the place. I rubbed him along his back, letting him know I was there for him, and if we did have our brains sucked out at least we were together.

Zane pulled on the door handle once more. I don't know what he was expecting, the thing to magically open, but he sighed when the door didn't budge. Perhaps he was testing the strength of the lock.

"Gimme a hand here, Jakey," Zane said. "Together we should be able to force the thing open."

I let go of Callum and let my blanket fall away. The thing was itching me anyway and I was glad to be rid of it. Zane and I readied ourselves while Callum looked on. His face reflected a concern only he could muster. God, he was gorgeous. I so wanted to take him in my arms and soothe away his worries. Run my fingers through his hair, over his skin. Enjoy his nakedness and above all wrap my lips around his beautiful and oh, so perfect cock. Nothing like a good ejaculation to wash the

worries away. Something I could've gone for instead of busting down doors.

"On the count of three, okay?" I said.

Zane nodded.

"One."

With my feet planted firm, I drew back my upper body, gaining as much space as I could so my shoulder would impact the door with the most force. We were standing face to face, our dicks almost touching. My mind swam with the thoughts of getting Zane to fuck me hard and on opening the door at the same time. Who said men couldn't think of two things at once? I smiled.

"Two."

Zane offered that wonderful cheeky smile of his in return. Knowing Zane, I'd say he thought the same—evident from the fact that he hardened a little more. Geez, the sexual energy created by being naked around the guys I loved was so tangible I could reach out and touch it.

"Three!" I yelled. Zane and I lunged at the door. The split second before we made contact, there was clicking sound. The door opened.

We were flung into the room by the force of our own bodies.

Before I knew what had happened, we were a tangle of limbs on the floor. The door slammed shut. Again, that clicking sound could be heard, but this time accompanied by the realisation that

we were trapped.

The room was pitch dark.

Chapter Four

Jacob! Zane!" Callum screamed from the other side of the door, his voice frantic, stricken with both fear and concern. Banging punctuated his words, getting louder and louder and more desperate with each passing second. What the fuck was the door made of to withstand being beaten like that? And more importantly, I suppose, how come it opened just as Zane and I were about to ram it?

Then the noise stopped.

Had Callum given up already? I swallowed hard. I had a nasty feeling, right in the pit of my stomach, that there was a lot more to this than I had first thought. Was there something in the room with us? And did that something want us separated?

Before I could call out for Callum, I felt Zane's legs move away from under my own. "What the fuck happened?" he questioned. "I mean, I don't mind you being on top, Jakey, but geez, give me some warnin'."

I didn't need to see the look on his face to know he was as puzzled as I was by all this, even though he hadn't lost any of that wonderful cheekiness he had in droves.

Again, before I could speak, I heard a noise that struck fear throughout my body. My heart beat loud, making my blood rush quick through my veins. My fingers tingled and my stomach knotted.

The noise? Footsteps.

I knew the sound didn't come from Zane. He wasn't wearing shoes and him walking anywhere in the room wouldn't have made such a sound anyway. Besides, the light that seeped in from under the door was just enough for me to catch his silhouette now that my eyes had become adjusted to the dark. Zane was at the door in front of me.

We weren't alone. The thing was with us. The darkness closed in around me. I could feel its presence. But what was it? The footsteps were not just ordinary shoes-on-the-floorboards type, not by a long shot. These were more like that of a cat. The slight scrape of nails or claws accompanying the padding across the floor toward me sent chills through my body. Only the footsteps weren't made by a cat either, far too heavy. In fact, I had no idea what would create such a noise. A monster? An alien?

Protect. Jacob. Zane.

The footsteps had come from behind me.

I licked my dry lips and jumped up to my feet, heading for Zane. The hairs on the nape of my neck stood to attention and my mouth went dry.

"There's something in here with us, Zane."

"No shit, Sherlock." He tested the handle again. It was locked.

That settled it. He had heard it, too. I ran my hand across the wall, hoping and praying that there was a light switch somewhere. From a surprising distance away from the door, my hand caught on something. The light switch? I sure hoped so. The footsteps pervaded the room again, this time much closer. I swore I could hear breathing. Was the thing right at the back of me, ready to pounce or something?

I swallowed hard and flicked the switch. In an instant, we were soaked in the familiar dull yellow glow of a bulb that was way too weak for the room it needed to illuminate. I turned. We were in some sort of storage room, shelves full of boxes and bundles all around us. I couldn't see any sign of the thing that had spoken to us or caused the noise earlier. Where had it disappeared to? Then again, where had Callum gone, for that matter?

"Fuck me, Jakey, I swear there was somethin' in here with us. Cals is right. This place is fucked up, big time," Zane said, turning the handle again.

The door creaked open.

We both looked at each other, then charged for the exit. We came together in a mesh of arms and legs, chests and genitals pressed as we tried to make as hasty an exit out of the storeroom as we could. Seconds later, we were back out on the landing.

"Where's Callum?" I asked.

"We'll search for him as we look into the rooms, okay?"

Callum was nowhere to be seen. We walked along the hallway that snaked around the building. We came across many rooms, most holding no interest other than containing antique furniture. There was a lounge, a dining room and more storage areas. The more we looked the more desperate I became. I needed him. I wanted him. But there was no sight of him. Where the fuck could he have got to? It wasn't like him to leave without at least letting us know. In fact, it was unlike him to leave, period.

"Perhaps he went upstairs to the bedroom," Zane said when we came to the end of the hallway, a flight of stairs confronting us. "You know how he's so impatient when it comes to gettin' into the sack."

"I think that sort of thing would be the last thing on his mind. I thin—"

Cannot protect. Jacob. Zane. Come to me.

I looked at Zane, and he returned the glare.

He'd heard that, too. A voice, distant and close and oh, so fucking creepy. But, as I heard the walls gurgle, probably from the heating ducts, I swore there was something else mixed in with the voice. Like a purr, but way deeper and with more resonance.

"Hold me, Jakey."

Now this was a turn around. Zane, my unshakable warrior, my knight, my hero was asking me to give him reassurance. I didn't hesitate. I grabbed his hand and pulled him close. He was cold, even though the air around us was warm.

I placed a foot onto the first step.

"Jacob! Zane!" We turned. I was confronted with the most wonderful sight. Callum was running toward us, arms outstretched. His nakedness more than apparent and most certainly welcome. His genitals swayed from side to side as he ran, providing a rather hypnotic sight, I must say. I smiled, one warm and welcome.

Both of us went to him. When we met, about half-way along the turning hall, we embraced. Our hugs filled with love, laughter and more than a few gropes upon each other's backsides.

"Where'd you go, Cals?" Zane asked, speaking what was on my mind as well.

"When I couldn't open the door I went downstairs to see if I could call for help. You

know, get that old man back here to get you out.” He drained white.

“What is it?” I asked, taking his hands.

“The phones, even the land-line...all of them are dead.”

Zane slapped his hands to his sides. “Oh, this is just great. Now we can’t call for help. Next fuckin’ thing the lights will all go out. That’ll just be fantastic, adding to this horror movie cliché we seem to be stuck in.”

I couldn’t help but chuckle. Zane was right. The lighthouse had everything a B-grade horror flick required—creaking floorboards, noises in the walls and voices from the dark. Heck, if I were watching what had happened to us on television, I’d be screaming at the folk to get the fuck out of there. But we couldn’t go. We hadn’t found Mr. Barnaby yet or, at the very least, a means to get to him.

“Well, thank fuck the lights didn’t go out,” I said, looking up to the dirty low wattage bulb hanging from a dusty cord.

Callum smiled, too. More a quiver across his plump lips, but a smile nevertheless. “Yeah, and I’m glad we’re naked, cause I...well, I...let’s just say I’m glad we’ve got no clothes on and leave it at that.”

Zane laughed, one full and hearty, slapping Callum on his back. “Did you get a little too

scared, Cals?"

Callum seemed to burn with hurt for a brief moment. "No."

I squeezed his hand. "Don't worry about that. We're here now."

"Yeah, but you weren't five minutes ago. What if you couldn't get out of that room? What was I supposed to do then? Swim for help?"

I pecked him on his lips, gentle, brushing him with my own. "But we're okay and I won't leave you, okay? Isn't that right, Zane?"

Zane nodded. "Sure thing, Jakey. 'Sides, we need you, Cals, just as much as you need us. We're a team, remember. Now, let's get the fuck on with this search so we can get outta here."

Callum's facial features relaxed, even though he still stared at me. "But we can't leave until the old man comes for us in the morning."

"If we last that long," Zane added with a cheeky but knowing smile as he proceeded up the stairs.

"Zane," I snapped, emulating Suzy. Not angry with him, but surprised that he'd say such a thing considering what had just happened. I hated to admit, things didn't look good.

Time is close. Callum. Zane. Jacob. Must come to me now.

"We're so dead," Callum said, coming close to hug me tight.

We both walked up the stairs, again Zane in the lead and again his butt giving us a nice view. Soon we were on a third floor landing. As with the second floor, to the left was a room, to the right, the hallway snaked.

“Should I test the door again?” Zane asked.

“If it’s locked, we leave it well enough alone,” Callum said, coming so he was behind me. I could feel his dick tickle my backside. In any other situation, that would have been more than enough to fire me up, swapping saliva and cum with each other in no time flat. But not now. I felt his concern. I didn’t fancy being trapped in a dark storeroom with God knows what stalking me. Callum continued, my train of thought had made me miss some of what he was saying. “...don’t fancy spending another second alone in this place.”

Zane did the heroics again, reaching out for the handle. I couldn’t help but notice that his hand was shaking this time. He turned it. The door wasn’t locked and it creaked open, the noise loud in my ears.

“Holy mother fucking God,” Zane said with a gasp once the door was opened proper. He stumbled back, almost tripping on himself.

What was inside the room shook me unlike anything I had ever experienced before in my life. We were confronted by ourselves. I mean, Zane

and Callum and Jacob walked out onto the landing and they were naked, too.

Chapter Five

I think my heart had skipped a beat and my blood froze. I couldn't move. Zane and Callum, I mean the Zane and Callum that were standing with me—the real Zane and Callum—they must have felt the same as me. They didn't budge an inch either. I realised my mouth was agape while I watched the other Zane and Callum and Jacob approach.

But something was different about our doppelgangers. They looked—well, they looked like they'd just been through hell. Their bodies were covered in cuts and bruises. Callum's double had a black eye and a nasty cut on his lip. The other Zane was just as battered, huge welts across his stomach. Then I studied my other self. He was as bad, if not worse, than the other two. I could see a gash across his chest—caked blood all over his body. The other Jacob even limped, supported by the other two.

I was about to speak, about to yell out my concern, when they disappeared in a cloud of

obscurity. Like smoke too far from the fire.

A long moment passed, before Zane asked, "What the fuck was that we just saw?"

"I don't know," I said, slow and deliberate.

No more protection. Jacob. Callum. Zane. Come to me. Come to me.

Again there was another moment of pause.

Finally, I said, "I think we should check the other rooms on this floor."

"Easy for you to say," Callum said, coming around to look me in the eye. His face filled with fear. "But did you just see that? They were us, but...they were injured, like they'd been through hell or something."

"Could be a time echo or somethin'," Zane said with a shrug of his shoulders.

What would have made him say that? "What?" was all I could come out with, my muscles still unresponsive to any thought I might have had of moving away from the landing. I was surprised I could even utter that word. My mind still reeled from having caught sight of myself looking like I did. There must be more to this than a time echo, but for the here and now, Zane's theory would have to do.

"Well, you know we're dealin' with eternal's here. I mean, I've been thinkin'. Perhaps they know we're onto 'em and they've decided to rattle our cages a bit to try and stop us. They could have

shown us a possible future to scare the shit out of us."

"Well it's bloody well worked as far as I'm concerned," Callum said.

I gathered my strength, my body became more responsive. I said, "You know, you may have a point there, Zane. I mean, the noises and the voices we've been hearing, they seem different to what just happened."

*Need protection now. I cannot provide. Callum.
Jacob. Zane. Come now.*

I ignored the voice, thankful Zane had proceeded to walk up the hall. Turning back to look at us, he said, "Just a thought."

Callum grabbed my hand and we followed, all three of us checking each room as we went before we were confronted by another set of stairs.

"I take it this place has another floor," Zane said, not wasting any time, walking up the stairs as soon as we had caught him up.

*You're getting closer. I am here. I am here. Callum.
Jacob. Zane.*

Callum swallowed so hard I could hear it above the noises of the pipes in the walls. "I just want those voices to stop."

"I know," I said.

On the next floor there wasn't a landing. There wasn't even a hallway twisting off to follow the curve of the lighthouse. Instead, there was one big

room. Massive, really. At the far end, beneath a window that was as large as any I had seen so far, there was a bed.

"I take it this is the bedroom," Zane said, that cheeky and cheerful disposition of his had returned. I liked him like this more than anything.

"Yeah, but we're not alone, either," Callum whispered. "Look."

Sure enough, near the wall to the left, stood a figure, silent and unmoving, but not a statue or an ornament or even human for that matter. What's more, the thing was alive. I saw it move one of its hands. Then its whole body turned. I was fixated. It glared at me. It's golden and blue eyes boring into my soul.

"Who the fuck are you?" Zane blurted.

That was the last sound I heard. With a whoosh of wind, one that chilled me to the bone, everything around me disappeared. Darkness found my eyes and I had lost my grip upon Callum.

I screamed, but no sound eventuated. I didn't care. I needed to know what was going on. I continued to scream, over and over in the vain hope that it was only my ears that had failed me. Hopefully, either Zane or Callum could answer my calls, come find me, because I got the sense I was lost and no longer in the lighthouse.

Slowly, a soft blue light became apparent,

bathing everything in an eerie glow. The light on my skin made me conscious of my nakedness for the first time since I entered the lighthouse. Perhaps because I couldn't see Zane or Callum anywhere. Being naked with them was natural, beautiful. Being naked alone was different, reminding me of all those years when I didn't have anyone to share my experiences with. An uncomfortable feeling.

I stood up. I was in a small, empty room, one so different to any we had explored in the lighthouse. For want of a better word to describe it, it was *alien*. Simple as that. There was a softness to the room's walls, floor and ceiling, like it was made of something malleable and forgiving, as unfired clay would be. But instead of leaving impressions when I walked upon the floor, since my feet did sink slightly into the soft material, it re-moulded back to being a flat floor seconds later.

In fact, upon closer inspection, I could almost say it was like I was standing on a dark, vein-like organic blanket that surrounded me, creating the room I had found myself within. Definitely not the lighthouse, that's for sure.

What's more, I became aware of a low hum. Something that reminded me of a noise an aircraft engine might make when muffled by glass and steel and whatever else separated the passengers from the outside world. Was I in a plane?

I went to the nearest wall, reaching out to touch it. It was warm. When I pressed my hand into it, it gave way, just as my feet had done when I traversed the room. I had to say, the wall felt like wet, warm sand. I could swear I felt a pulse, too. Was this place living? I shuddered at that thought. Was I inside something? Fuck. I'd been eaten. But if I had been eaten, why was I alive? Or indeed, how come the room I was within had what looked like a door and a panel with an LCD display on it at the other end.

A moment of confusion was pierced by another sound that came into my conscious thoughts. A noise that struck fear into my heart. The footsteps. The same that were accompanied by that scrapping noise, padding across the living floor.

I ran to the door. Not looking back, my neck tingled with fear. The thing, the creature, the alien, or whatever you want to call it, was right behind me. I slapped the panel and the door slid open.

In the next room I was confronted by the sight of Zane and Callum, lying on the floor, arm in arm and a tangle of legs, kissing. I smiled. My worries, for the briefest moment, melted away. The sight of my two beautiful men showing each other affection always did that to me.

"I see you couldn't wait for me then," I said, coming over to them.

Both of them had erections, their foreskins

retracted. Soaked in the blue glow, I could see glistening wet patches on Callum's stomach, either from Zane's pre-cum or the many kisses he would have planted on his skin, or both. What a magnificent sight.

They broke their kiss. Zane said, "Come and join us, Jakey."

His words, even though they were what he would have said when he was with us in an intimate way, struck me as odd. I was taken out of the moment I had been caught up in when I had first laid my gaze upon their writhing bodies on the floor.

I hesitated in my advance. "But this isn't the lighthouse...and we're not alone here."

Callum let out a chuckle and a deep sigh of relief. "We're safe, Jacob. Trust me. Now c'mon, get that beautiful cock of yours over here so you can give me some much needed loving. I so need you and Zane to fuck me hard, and right now, too."

I was stunned. Again, not by what was said. Dirty talk I was used to. I loved it, in fact. But what floored me was why both Callum and Zane would be so nonchalant about this whole situation. Heck, how could they think of making love at a time like this? I'd only just escaped from the alien in the other room.

In that moment, I realised that the door had slid

open and that sound, those footsteps, rang out once more to send fear through my very being. I swallowed hard. Zane and Callum didn't seem to care and continued with what they were doing before I entered the room. Callum planted tender kisses all over Zane's chest, moving down toward his groin.

I was more than confused. What the fuck was going on? This wasn't like Callum at all. He'd be scared out of his mind, unable to think about doing anything other than running away, let alone sustaining an erection and about to take Zane's cock into his mouth.

"Relax, Jakey." Zane said between gasps. "Let me suck you off while Cals does his thing. Then we can get more down and dirty, just how you like it."

Callum was kissing and licking him where his garland had been tattooed, holding up his cock, ready for whatever he had in mind next, which wasn't hard to figure out. Zane was about to get blown. The sight of Callum lavishing all his attention on Zane made me stir.

Until I heard a purring noise from behind me. I turned. What I saw drained the blood from every pore and froze me onto the spot. A figure, not quite solid in form, but both feline and man in appearance, smiled at me. A smile filled with pointed teeth and one that struck both fear and

curiosity through my mind. Those golden and blue eyes unmoving. Unblinking.

I opened my mouth, but no words came out. My extremities tingled and I had a terrible thought that I had been unconscious for a long time. I mean, how was it Zane and Callum were so comfortable that they could make love with this thing in the room with them. I'd obviously missed out on something here.

"I am Tink. Welcome to my ship, Jacob. You are safe now," the cat-man-ghost thing said, his voice smooth and deep.

Looking at the *thing* staring at me I couldn't help but get the impression he wasn't about to attack me. The smile was warm, welcome. What the fuck was his story then? And why weren't we in the lighthouse anymore?

"What are you?" was all I could manage after the longest time.

"I am Tink."

I shook my head. "I got that. What I mean is...what *are* you, because you're plainly not human."

I took the opportunity to study our *host* in more detail. He was tall and slender, with long nimble fingers, and covered in the blackest fur I'd ever seen, as deep as the eternity of space. As I had noticed before, he wasn't quite solid. More like looking at a dark liquid that so happened to be in

the shape of a feline-come-man thing, complete with cats' eyes and a cute button nose.

Across his chest, stomach and between his legs there wasn't much fur, just like the underside of any cat really. He had pointed ears, again like a cat. And of course, those piercing eyes. He had multiple nipples. Although, I didn't need to guess about his sex, his genitals more than apparent. He was hung well, ample fur covered balls underneath a cock that so happened to have the nicest foreskin I'd ever seen. It was a thing of beauty really, not quite a pucker tip, but covering his head perfectly and nice and long.

A delighted yelp from Zane diverted my attention for a split second. I didn't need to turn around to know that Callum had taken him into his mouth, sucking and slurping on his cock, enjoying it. Zane always yelped like that when he was getting a blow job.

"I am spirit folk. You and your lovers were being hunted by an eternal. I rescued you. I am enemy of all eternals."

Chapter Six

Tink continued, “Lionel said I’d find you at the portal building. And here you are. In my company. Now relax. Enjoy yourself with the others. There will be much to do later. Much to do.”

Again, I was surprised by words that had been spoken, and in as many minutes, too. “I didn’t see any eternal in the lighthouse. I only heard you, *Tink*.”

The being named Tink purred and let out a chuckle. “It was hiding in the shadows. The dark places. Planning. Biding its time. Lucky I came when I did.”

I thought back to the time we had spent in the lighthouse. What Tink said made sense. Callum did say he saw something move many times in the ducts and in the shadows. “But I thought the thing in the lighthouse was you. You were with us when we were trapped in the storeroom, weren’t you?”

“To save you. Eternal was close then. It nearly tricked you by posing as doppelgangers. It was

hoping you would have reached out to comfort the image of your injured selves. Nearly worked. Thankful you didn't. Thankful beautiful Zane didn't. Thankful Callum went downstairs. Ran away. Otherwise you would all be eternal food right now." Tink's body seemed to solidify, then fade away to what I could only describe as an outline before he came back to the semi-solid state I had become used to. Was that how he showed emotion? All my emotions had been replaced by one thing. Fascination. But I also had many questions. Why didn't Tink introduce himself earlier? Was it because he didn't want the eternal knowing he was there, too? And did he say *beautiful Zane*?

Then something more important crossed my mind. The thought of Callum being siphoned, fed off, made me shudder. Thankfully, he was enjoying Zane right now and not fighting for his life under an eternal's curse. From what I had just been told I had Tink to thank for that.

I extended out my hand. "Well, if you saved us, then thanks."

Tink shook my hand. His touch was warm and firm. He shook with enough strength for me to know that he was sincere in what he had said. Body language never lied, and a man with a weak hand shake was someone who wasn't to be trusted as my dad had told me on many occasions.

"I will bring you some food. Drink, too. You have been unconscious for a while. Matter transport is tough on solid mass beings. We are far in the depths of space. Nearing eternal homeworld. Lionel is waiting for us. I like you. I am your friend."

I smiled. "Then I am your friend, too."

"Good," Tink smiled, one that matched the warmth of his touch. But the next words out of his mouth were far from comforting. "Eternals have spread beyond their realm. We must stop them. Feed off humans without having to travel through the portals. Not good. Not good." With that, Tink turned and headed for the door. It was then I noticed he had a tail...and a cute arse.

"Hey, when you come back, maybe you can join us, Tinkles," Zane said, still in raptures from Callum's affection. "I'd like to fuck me some real man pussy right about now." There must be something going on between Tink and Zane, he had a pet name for the cat being already. Or was that just Zane being Zane?

Tink didn't answer. His purrs grew louder, even though he was walking away. Zane's words reminded me of the fact that there was some fun being had without me. The gentle sound of Callum sucking off Zane had filled the room, reinforcing that fact.

"What about *my* man pussy, Zane? Do you

want that, too?" I asked, feeling relaxed, and for the first time in a long while, comfortable with where I was and the situation we had found ourselves in. Was that Tink's doing? I did really, truly feel at ease. I also knew we had an ally. Someone who was going to help us get back Mr. Barnaby. Someone who knew a lot more about eternal's than I did. Hope sparked within me. Then my arousal overtook that hope. Fuck, I think I needed Zane and Callum more than anything right now. A great stress relief if nothing else.

"Come over here, Jakey. You'll get yours and you know it."

I was on my knees before the next beat of my heart. A beat that had quickened, I must admit. The thought of being with Zane and Callum more than enough to get me aroused. My cock hardened. Zane grabbed me when I shuffled beside him, retracting my foreskin and taking my ripe, red head into his mouth. I hadn't noticed, but I had produced a hell of a lot of pre-cum. Zane lapped it up. The sight of his lips upon me made my mind spin with delight. Seemed we had some time before we reached the eternal's homeworld. Might as well use it in a constructive way.

While Zane worked on my length, Callum came off him. That delightful slurp echoed through the room. Then the sound of Zane's cock slapping onto his stomach, slick with all the attention it had

received, followed a short moment after that.

Callum positioned himself so he was above Zane and I knew what he wanted. Heck, I wanted it, too. But I was happy for Callum to go first, to have Zane's hardness within him. Seconds later, Callum had sat himself so that he could take Zane into his arse, groaning with delight as he grabbed Zane's cock from behind himself and manoeuvred so he could be entered. I think Zane enjoyed it when others put his cock in for him. I enjoyed it, too.

A wonderful yelp left Callum's beautiful lips when he had Zane within him proper. Zane reached down and grabbed Callum's hardness, jacking him off, milking him of the pre-cum that now dribbled onto his stomach. Zane writhed underneath Callum, and at the same time he came away from me. My cock was wet. He had used a lot of saliva.

"Give Cals one, too, Jakey. He needs a good double fuck. He's been gaggin' for it all day." That cheeky smile lit up his face.

I didn't hesitate. I'd had two inside me at once, back when I had last visited the dragon realm, and I loved it. Sure, it hurt like motherfucking hell, but it also cemented the bond I had with the two who had taken me. Now it was Callum's turn. He would soon know that Zane and I loved him without question.

"You want me, too, baby?" I whispered in Callum's ear.

He had his eyelids closed tight and his face reflected both pleasure and pain. The experience of having Zane's huge cock inside him would have accounted for that. But, to my surprise, Callum nodded. Between his teeth, he said, "Give it to me, Jacob. I want you. Oh, fuck how I want you, too."

I didn't need any more encouragement than that. "Just let me know if it hurts too much and I'll stop, okay?"

He nodded again. His concentration clear. He was in raptures of ecstasy, probably trying to hold back his own ejaculation if anything else. Zane was working him hard, both his arse and his cock. Callum had produced so much pre-cum a pool had gathered at Zane's navel.

I came so I was behind Callum, pressing my hands on his back to let him know I was there. He leaned forward. Zane kissed him, the sound of their tongues and lips making contact another wonderful sound that filled the room. I parted Zane's legs so I could get to my beautiful Callum. The sight of Callum's arse filled with Zane's love more than enough to spur me on. I was hard, slick from Zane's saliva and ready.

When I pushed my cock to Callum's arse, above Zane's, something that wasn't as difficult as I first

thought, Callum broke his kiss and let out a cry.

"You okay?" I asked, stopping what I was doing. My head the only part of my length that had pierced him. I ran my hands along his hips, gentle and reassuring. He was fucking gorgeous, his legs as wide as they could be, his back arched. He wanted this.

"Fuck yes," he hissed. "Keep going...keep going."

I pushed myself in deeper, a move accompanied by lots more moans and little yelps. His tightness was fantastic. What's more, the sensation of Zane's cock moving beneath mine helped to make the experience all that more special. I was basically being rubbed off while I fucked Callum. Amazing.

In the next moment, while my body began to sing out with pleasure, Tink re-entered the room. He spoke, but I didn't hear what he said. My concentration on making sure I didn't blow too soon and that I wasn't hurting Callum.

The cat spirit man came over me. Again he said stuff, but this time I caught some of what he said. "...Enjoying yourself."

I nodded. I was enjoying myself, that was certain. "Yeah," was my reply, my body heated from my efforts, sweat dripping from my brow. I loved it and I moved myself faster and deeper within Callum. Zane accelerated his movement,

too. I could feel it. I shuddered with pleasure.

Zane was no longer kissing Callum. I think such a thing would have been impossible anyway. Callum was groaning so much, panting with delight, that doing such a thing wouldn't have proved productive anyway. Instead, Zane pecked him on his chin and cheeks, encouraging him to keep with the moment. Zane was good like that.

"C'mon, Tinkles, get in and have some fun, too," Zane said, that cheeky smile returning with vengeance. "I've got plenty of lovin' to give, especially for my hero." I could see a look of want in Zane's eyes. What's more, he must have been convincing, because Tink, just like I had done, knelt beside Zane after he had placed the tray of food down onto the organic floor. Tink's body solidified.

I massaged Callum's back while I made love to him, but I also had an urge to reach out and touch Tink. His fur, that beautiful thick black fur of his, begged to be touched. I was about to do so, but Zane beat me to it. Although, when he grabbed the cat being's cock, slipping his finger into his long foreskin so he could rub the sensitive head, touching his fur was probably the last thing on his mind. Then again, that was Zane for you. He didn't stand on ceremony, not at all.

The room was filled with Callum's groans and a purr unlike I had ever heard. So deep and

resonant I could feel it through me. It couldn't help but smile. Seconds after Zane had taken Tink's cock, he was hard. His foreskin had retracted, not on its own, but with a good amount of manual encouragement from Zane. Tink's head as big and hard as any I had seen. That part of him was all man, no doubt about it.

Tink let out a yelp as Zane took him into his mouth and played with his balls at the same time. I had also succumbed to my desires, too. While I kept one hand on Callum's back, still massaging him, I reached out and ran my other hand through Tink's fur. He was so soft it was unreal. I'd never felt such a thing. So delicate yet at the same time definitely masculine, for I could feel his taught muscles underneath the fur. Tink was enjoying himself, just as I was. Just as all of us were.

Zane came away, Tink's cock so hard and wet and glistening and beautiful that I gasped. I then felt ecstasy rise up within me, my stomach tingle. I was approaching the point of no return. Being inside Callum and feasting my eyes on everything going on around me the reason for me coming to climax so quick. I had no choice.

An instant later, I shuddered. I couldn't hold back. The sensations too much for me. I blew everything I had inside Callum. Wave after wave of pleasure pulsed through my body as I released. A release that was both awesome and needed at

the same time. Callum must have felt me let go. He groaned with delight. I collapsed onto him, letting my cock soften while still inside him. Soon, I slipped out of him, missing his warmth straight away. I came around so I was close to Zane and those beautiful plump lips of his. I was hoping Zane would want to taste my efforts. He always did after I had orgasmed.

Instead, Tink asked, "May I lick you clean. Jacob? It would give me pleasure. We are friends."

I smiled and replied, "Sure. I'd like that."

"Man, this is so fucking hot," Callum said. He had come off Zane. I could see straight away that Callum hadn't held back either. Zane's stomach and chest was covered in cum. Then again, so was Callum's. He must have blown a massive load. I couldn't blame him. I did, too.

Tink then added, "Can I lick all of you? Zane, you need to let me lick you when you ejaculate. I want to taste you. You're so beautiful."

From Tink's words, I couldn't help but get the feeling there was something more than just lust beneath the meaning. There was something more. Was Tink in love with Zane?

Zane wasn't finished, he was still as hard and magnificent as ever. The sight of his cock resting in Callum's cum on his smooth skin an awesome one. How the man could keep going even after such a sensory overload was beyond me. He was a

machine. But my God, I loved him.

"I want you, Tinkles, no doubt," Zane said with so much lust in his voice. He sat up, running his hand across Tink's chest, feeling his nipples. "You're fuckin' amazing. Then when I've ploughed you good and hard, you can lick me all the live long day. I'm yours, my kitty cat."

Callum looked at me. I think he had caught on, too. I was fine with Zane being with Tink. I was kind of relieved in a way. His words had confirmed that Zane had fallen in love with the cat being. Besides, all I wanted was my men to be happy. Seemed Tink floated Zane's boat and as far as I was concerned all was perfect right now.

Chapter Seven

After Tink had licked my foreskin clean of my cum, lapping the fluid up like a cat at a saucer of milk, he cleaned Callum, too. His tongue was rough, as I would have expected from a being who was a cross between a cat and a man. The sensation of his tongue rubbing my sensitive skin an experience that heightened the sensation, I had to admit. I got a semi. I could really get used to Tink.

When Tink had done what he had wanted to Callum and me, Zane grabbed him around his waist and made him kneel down. His impatience clear. I bet he couldn't hold on much longer and was also close to climax. The fact his balls were so tight in his sack, evidence of that. That and the hard as stone look of determination on his face. I always loved to watch the expressions on guys' faces when they were close to orgasm. So fucking hot.

Zane took up Tink's tail, pulling on it so his arsehole was exposed and ready for the fucking he was about to get. "Can you spit on me, Cals. I

want this one to go in nice and easy. Don't want to hurt my Tinkles too much for his first time, hey?"

When Callum had moistened Zane's cock to the point where it dripped of saliva, he came to embrace me. How did Zane know Tink was a virgin? I definitely missed something and that annoyed me. Not in a bad way, not at all. I just hated the not knowing.

Next thing I knew, Callum was laying sweet kisses on my cheek and lips, running his hands across my stomach, pulling me close to him. I loved him so much, and wanted to have him again. Actually, no—I wanted him to have me. That familiar yearning overtook any thoughts I might have had as I watched Zane move behind Tink, close his eyelids tight and push himself deep into Tink's arsehole. The cat being purred with that deep resonance once more, arching his back, his fur standing to attention, his ears pricked up. Seemed Tink liked Zane a lot, too.

"Oh, fuck you're good and tight, Tink. So fuckin' good," Zane said with gasps that made him shudder. But I could also see that Zane wouldn't last long. His lips were quivering and he had that tremble he always got across his stomach when he was close to climax.

"Zane is so big and beautiful," Tink said between gasps and purrs of pleasure.

Sure enough, my suspicion was correct. Zane's

face twisted and he shuddered, his hold on Tink's hips tightened until his knuckles were white. But instead of blowing his load inside the cat being, Zane pulled out, his cum shooting out to cover the long, soft fur on Tink's back. I'd never known Zane to pull out before.

"Fuck me!" Zane said when Tink twisted his body so he could lick off Zane's cum from within his fur, like a cat would do who cleaned himself. "That's so cool, or what? Fuck, I want you again, Tinkles. Heck, you can fuck me this time. I want you again and again, just like when I'm with Jakey and Cals." Zane's eyes reflected his want, but also something else. Something I had never seen before. I couldn't pin it down, but to me it looked like a need. Zane needed Tink.

With lips saturated by Zane's effort and cum dribbling down to his chin, Tink said, "You taste the best of them all, my beautiful Zane. Come and hold me. Let Tink warm you. Hold you forever."

Zane did as he was asked and was soon folded in Tink's arms. The cat being ran his clawed hand tenderly over Zane's skin, purring as he did so. The affection between them tangible. Zane looked content, but above all, he looked the happiest I had ever seen him, even when Callum and me had shown him our affection.

"I think Zane's found a new friend," Callum said. He was rubbing my balls and cock, inspiring

me to get hard again. I could see I didn't need to encourage him in any way shape or form.

"Are things with Suzy and Zane okay?" I asked, more of a thought than an actual question that was meant to be spoken out loud. Sure, Zane was as horny as the next hormone soaked guy. But still. Even he wouldn't have been so quick to jump on a complete stranger. After all, that's what Tink was. A stranger. No matter how friendly he might seem.

Callum came to kiss my nipple, stirring them to hardness as well. "From what I remember, he did say that Suzy had eyes for Devlyn more than anything."

In that moment, I felt for Zane. Yes, I had shown him beyond doubt that I loved him. Callum had, too. I knew he appreciated that. He had said so many times. But everyone needs that someone special. That someone who they feel so complete with nothing else matters. Suzy had shown, time and time again, that she wasn't interested in anything more than friendship or the occasional buddy fuck with Zane. I know they had been intimate, their garlands proof of that. But I think that was more a progression than an actual deep down need for each other. Zane must have come to that realisation, too.

Thinking back, Devlyn did have an eye for her. She must have felt the same. Perhaps they had

consummated their love for each other while Callum and Zane were trying to rescue me from Nottolu. I would have to ask her about that the next time I saw her.

All I knew was what I saw right now. Zane and Tink held each other like Callum and I held each other. Sure, threesomes and foursomes were fun, but really, that's all they were. Fun. A deep and meaningful relationship, for me, was what I shared with Callum. Maybe Zane felt the same. Maybe he needed someone special, too. He deserved it, no question.

We'd never stop loving each other, but really, being held by your soul mate was the ultimate reward of the human experience. Or in Zane's case, being held by an immensely handsome cat being must have had the same effect. They were perfect together.

I'd always want Zane. He was someone special. But in that moment, I knew the dynamic of our relationship had changed. Zane had found someone he cared for on a level that went beyond physicality. It was plain to see Zane cared for Tink with everything he had, mind, body and soul. How fantastic. The next words out of his mouth confirmed my thoughts, "You know, Tinkles, my kitty cat, I think I could get so used to this. Don't ever leave me, you hear?"

Tink was massaging Zane, feeling the soft skin

where his pubes had once been. The skin now adorned with the garland he had received to stop Suzy from being mated to anyone else. He didn't do such a thing because he wanted to have her, far from it. That wasn't Zane at all. He got himself tattooed to protect her.

"Tink likes Zane a lot, too. But you must get a new garland. Tink and Zane get a new garland together?"

Zane smiled, one deep and bright and the most peaceful I had ever see on him. "Zane would like that," he said, emulating the cat being.

I smiled. Callum had stirred my cock to attention, taking me into his mouth. I then concentrated my efforts on what Callum did. In my peripheral vision I could see Tink come around to make love to Zane, the room soon filled with their gentle groans.

"Make love to me, Callum," I said.

For the longest time, Callum enjoyed me and my body. He ran his hands across me with such love that I couldn't help but be consumed by him, lavishing deep and passionate kisses upon me at the same time. Nothing else mattered. Nothing else even came close right now. The world was perfect. Callum was happy. Zane was happy. In the end, that meant that I was happy.

Once I had cooled from Callum's affection and my body no longer tingled with ecstatic delight, I

went over to the tray of food Tink had brought in earlier. All of a sudden hunger was the only thought in my mind.

Zane and Tink had finished, too. Tink's fur was slick with sweat and Zane's beautiful pure white skin a sexy sheen. They were kissing, still holding onto each other tight, as though their lives depended on it. I admired Zane. When he gave his love, even to those who didn't reciprocate, like Corey Harrington, he gave his all. Tink was one lucky son-of-a-bitch. One thing was certain, if Tink ever hurt Zane, having an eternal hunt him would be nothing. I'd kill him.

"I'm starved," Callum said, picking up a bluish oblong shaped fruit thing. Well, I thought it was a fruit. Still, no matter what it was, the look of delight on Callum's face told me the thing tasted good.

I was about to place some of it into my mouth, when a klaxon sounded, scaring the living shit out of me. Zane jumped up and Tink dashed for the door. "What's going on?" I questioned.

"Dunno," Zane said, "but Tinkles reckons that's the proximity warning or somethin'."

Callum, with a mouthful of food, said, "I didn't hear Tink say anything."

He was right. Tink hadn't spoken a word.

"He talks into my mind, is all. Kind of like how he did when we were in the lighthouse, but kind

of deeper."

"You like Tink, don't you?" I asked, taking the opportunity to confirm all of my thoughts and set my mind at ease. I wanted to make sure Zane was happy.

"Yeah. He's fuckin' hot. Just like you and Cals."

Callum said, "You *can* be with him, you know. Jacob and me won't mind at all. You know we'll always love you."

Zane sat between us, placing one arm around me, the other upon Callum. "I know. And don't you worry, I'll fuck you both good any time anywhere. But yeah, Tink is...well, he..." Zane's words drifted away, like he was struggling to put into succinct form how he felt about the cat being.

"Go on," I said, bringing my arm around him, reciprocating his embrace.

"I think I've...fallen for him...Jakey. I've never fallen for someone so quick before. What the fuck's the matter with me? I mean, when I woke up from the transport thingy, there he was. But I didn't run away. Somethin' compelled me to reach out and touch him, so I did. Next thing I know, I'm sharing his thoughts and feelings and—well, he showed me shit I never thought I'd see. He showed me love and hope and a strength I have to admit I admire. He's amazing. I shared his whole life. He's lonely...just like I was before I met you, Jakey. He needs someone, and to tell you the

truth, I need someone special, too. You have Cals and...and I don't have Suzz no more. She digs the dragon dude Devlyn. I'm fine with that...But fuck me, I am so in love with Tinkles." I didn't say a word. I let Zane get it all out. He continued, but not before kissing me with such tenderness that I couldn't help but gasp. "I'll always want you and Cals. Always. But I *need* Tinkles. He...he completes me. You understand, don't you, Jakey?"

I nodded. "I sure do."

Callum leaned over and kissed Zane, square on his lips and with tongue, too. When he parted he said, "You have our blessing, Zane."

"Thanks guys. I so really needed to hear that." Zane's eyes had become watery. He wiped them. Right now I loved Zane more than anything. He had found someone special and I couldn't be happier for him.

Tink entered the room. This time he had phased out a lot, only his outline visible. "The eternal's have detected us. I don't think they know who we are. Taking evasive manoeuvres. Told ship to hide behind the sun."

"Are we going to be all right?" Callum offered, that look of fear striking his face once more. He had dropped the fruit thing.

Tink nodded. "We should be."

Zane stood up, going to his new lover. "You're the best. Now, where does a bloke take a slash

around here? I'm gonna explode real soon if I don't siphon my python."

"I will show you," Tink said, coming so he could hold Zane's hand.

"You gonna hold it for me?" Zane smiled, again with the cheekiness.

"Yes, my beautiful Zane."

I laughed. Yep. That confirmed it. Zane had it bad for Tink. He never mentioned body functions to those he didn't care about. Next thing, he'll be farting in Tink's presence. Then their relationship would be set in stone. The two might as well marry. That would be nice. A double wedding.

Tink smiled at Zane while he embraced him, bringing him close to his chest. Tink was a lot taller than Zane. The cat being must be at least seven foot tall, if not more. Fuck, I could get lost in all that fur. Right there and then I could see the appeal of being with Tink.

"We must go to the bridge," Tink purred. "Better view there. More control."

Tink led us through the ship, but not before showing Zane where he could piss. They were gone for longer than I would have liked considering the circumstances, but hey, new love was like that. It led to unexpected occurrences. I bet Zane and Tink had got up to a bit more than just going to the loo.

I smiled and held Callum tight.

Chapter Eight

On the bridge, another room that was all organic, but with moulded panels and chairs that looked like lumps of wet soil, Tink said, "Sit. Callum. Jacob. We must remain undetected while we descend to the planet and rescue Lionel. He is waiting. Zane, my beautiful, you can sit on my lap. I will comfort you while I work."

"Fuck yeah, Tinkles. I'll sit on you anytime." Zane said.

I couldn't help but notice Zane had a semi, his foreskin that barely covered his head glistened with pre-cum. I bet they'd be fucking like rabbits once all this was over. I couldn't blame them at all. I'll be the same with Callum. But not yet. I mean, I wouldn't be completely happy until Mr. Barnaby was safe in the General Store, happy ordering in bargains that Aloysius would keep an eye on in the storeroom.

"They're so cute together," Callum said, knocking me from my reverie.

"So are we," I said. I embraced him and before I

knew it my mind was spinning with those wonderful dizzy spells I always got when Callum kissed me. His taste washing over every other sense. He kissed me deep and with so much love I felt myself stir. Fuck. Did we have time for more fun?

My question was answered by the sounding of another klaxon. Tink shouted something, but I didn't catch the words. My mind still cloudy from Callum's affection.

Zane came into view, looking at me intently, "Jakey, no time for face suckin'. Tinkles reckons we've been spotted again."

Sure enough, when I came away from Callum, my lips tingling, there was a view of space in front of me on a large screen. Where the screen had come from, I didn't know. One thing was certain. There were three ships approaching. They sort of looked like TIE-fighters from *Star Wars*, but more elongated and with bulbous bits stuck here and there. They also looked menacing.

"What are they?" Callum asked, speaking my thoughts.

Tink pressed some panels in the organic table-thing he was seated at. "Eternals. They have space travelling capacity since they began feeding off the Banshan folk in the fourth quadrant. Their portals got more powerful. Their reach long. Now they can travel in space and arrive at a place in greater

numbers for host taking and feeding. They are the locusts of the galaxy."

"Say what?" Zane said. I understood his confusion. Tink talked fast, especially when he was excited.

I added, "Does that mean that the eternal gain technology from their victims, too?"

Tink nodded. "Yes. At first eternal could be controlled. Dragon folk did that. But with all the in-fighting of the clans, they went unchecked. With each victim they gained more knowledge. Now they are spread across the galaxy."

"Fuck me!" Zane said with a whistle.

"I will later, my beautiful Zane," Tink offered while he continued to press panels. I let out a laugh. Zane's cheekiness was going to get him in into trouble with Tink. Good on him. "But for now we must evade them. Otherwise they will gain the organic technology of the spirit folk. Soon after that will be able to phase shift, too. We mustn't let that happen."

"Say, what did the eternal gain from humanity?" Callum asked. "I mean, we don't have space travel or phase shift or anything cool like that."

Tink turned to look Callum in the eye. "Human folk are just hosts and food. Like cattle. Have been for eons. Decided long ago that one race would be harvested for eternal consumption. Humans

picked because of their numbers. Because they are good food and good hosts. Easy to feed off. Eternals easier to control when their prey located in the one place. But now they have got greedy. They want more."

"Oh." Callum held me tighter.

"Geez, way to make us feel inferior, Tinkles." Zane said.

Tink came to embrace Zane, running his clawed hands over his skin, purring deep. "You are beautiful. So beautiful. Tink loves Zane. All that matters. All that should matter."

Zane returned the embrace. "Zane loves Tink," he whispered with such heartfelt conviction I couldn't help but be in awe of it. I looked at Callum. He was smiling.

There was no time to remain in the glow of all of our love for each other. Another warning bell sounded. This time a voice, one that spoke in a sort of car-navigator tone, said, "Energy bursts at thirty kelks and gaining."

Tink ran to the main table-thing, his tail swishing erratically from side to side. If I read cat being body language correctly, I'd say he was one unhappy man at the moment. "We are being fired upon. Must get away."

The ship said, "Inertial dampeners off. Evasive manoeuvres effective."

"Hold on," Tink screamed.

The screen blurred and I felt a sudden urge to throw up. My body experienced a sensation not unlike being on a roller-coaster ride. Only thing was, I didn't get a chance to hold on. I fell onto Callum and together we found the floor.

A flash of light blinded me for a moment and the smell of burning flesh filled my nostrils. Was the ship on fire? There was shouting. Again, I couldn't make out what was being said. So much noise surrounded me. The ship was screaming, as was Callum and Zane.

A strong hand pulled me up. It was Tink. "Get to escape pods. I must destroy the ship. We are outnumbered."

I rubbed my head. It hurt right in the middle of my forehead. Had I hit something when I fell? Perhaps Callum's shoulder. I couldn't remember. "Won't we still be a target in the escape pods?" I asked, my voice groggy.

"No. Pods can phase shift. I have programmed them to land on the dark side of the eternal homeworld. This ship will then fly into the sun when we are free and safe. Cannot let spirit folk technology fall into eternal hands. Must not."

I didn't argue. Tink herded us down corridors, all the while the walls groaned and the blue lights flickered when everything around us shook. I'd say the ship was coping a beating from the eternals. Shit. This wasn't going to be good.

Many times I was flung against the walls or into the arms of either one of the others. Tink pulled me up, his strength clear. I could see why Zane had fallen for him. He was a noble warrior. A trait that Zane had in abundance, too. They were indeed perfect for each other.

We came into a room that looked exactly like the one I had woken up in. The only difference was that on the far wall there were four circular holes. About the size of dustbin lids, if I had to guess.

"Each one of you must get inside one pod launch bay," Tink said, his voice commanding and with an urgency I could understand, no question. We were getting our arses kicked.

"You mean I'm going to be alone in one of these pod things?" Callum said. I didn't need to look at him to know he was shit scared. I had to admit, I felt the same. What if one of us didn't make it? What if something worse happened, like we got separated? How the hell were we going to find Mr. Barnaby on a strange planet without Tink's help?

My stomach turned, and not in a nice way. Here I was, about to get into a small pod with the goal of landing on a planet with beings who considered humans their cattle. What's more, I was naked, easily accessible for the eternal's to feed upon, siphon me dry of all the time energy of

my life with a simple cock-dock. Fuck, I had a bad feeling about this.

I didn't have time to reflect on my predicament. The lights extinguished and the room was plunged into darkness. Callum screamed. But before I could offer any thought, Tink grabbed me and led me to one of the pod's launch bays. I knew it was Tink...unless of course either Zane or Callum hadn't cut their nails lately.

A rush of wind struck me. Then an eerie red glow filled my vision. I was in what I could only describe as a coffin-like capsule. Sure, it was organic like everything else had been on Tink's ship, making it comfortable, but I couldn't help but feel the panic of claustrophobia overtake any reason I clung on to. There was even a panel with all sorts of numbers and weird letters floating in front of my face. From what I could make out, it was showing me a map and the path of the pod's trajectory through space. I assumed the big spherical thing displayed near the left side of the screen was the planet of my destination. The planet Tink referred to as the eternal's homeworld.

I was scared out of my mind, and not because I was afraid to die. Rather, I felt for Callum. What would he do without me? I then thought of Zane. How he'd just found his soul mate, found love so deep that even breathing hurt with the pain of want. If anything happened to him, I don't know

what I'd do. Heck, if anything happened to any of them, I'd be lost. They were all my world now, including Tink.

The planet loomed large on the screen. Seconds later, I assumed I had struck the atmosphere. The pod shuddered. I licked my lips with a nervous energy I hadn't felt for a long time. Fear no longer consumed me. Funny enough, I was struck by curiosity. Damn it. What did I have to be like this? Why did I always have to know the why and how of everything?

I couldn't help myself I suppose. I wanted to know what the planet below looked like. What would a world filled with beings who fed off others to survive be like? Did they have houses? Cities? Or did they live alone? Waiting for the right victim or a portal or a spaceship to become available? From what Tink had told us, the eternal had been controlled for a long time. I knew the dragon folk controlled the portals to some extent, only a few eternal able to bleed through to this plane of existence. But now things were different. Now they had come in great numbers and had gained space travel technology, too. Holy fuck. That was one scary thought. An invasion of eternal upon the feeding grounds of Earth.

Before I could add another scary thought to the nightmare I had envisioned, the pod shuddered

again. The screen flashed words I didn't understand, but didn't need to. A hiss and a rush of wind struck me. The pod opened.

I had landed.

Chapter Nine

The air was sweet, like frangipani and honeysuckle. Stars filled the sky. Strange stars, with nebulas and constellations I couldn't begin to name. I stepped out of the pod. Along with the sweetness, I noticed the air was warm. Comfortable enough to be naked, anyway. Perhaps this was a tropical planet, just like the one I had visited in the dragon realm. Such a thing made sense. Clothing only complicated the feeding method, anyway.

I was surrounded by what I could only describe as a clearing. But instead of trees, I was in a forest of crystals. All the colours I could imagine, reflecting and refracting the starlight. Some were huge, thicker than buildings, while most were clumps with many spires reaching toward the sky.

Not too far away, another pod caught my eye. It was nestled amongst a small crop of crystal. The hatch opened with a hiss and out stepped Zane. He waved to me. I ran to him.

"We've got to find the others," I said,

embracing him.

"I saw a pod land just over there." He gestured toward a large copse of crystal, one with spires so tall and thick they dominated the view. "Tink told me to tell you to make sure the pods are destroyed. We gotta press the self-destruct button. Right here."

Zane reached into his pod. Near the screen there was another smaller panel. One I hadn't noticed. He pressed it. Seconds later, there was a whooshing sound and a gentle breeze that tickled my skin. The pod had disappeared. I'd swear the thing imploded.

I went over to my pod and did the same. I couldn't help but get that terrible sinking feeling as I watched it vanish. How were we meant to get away from this place without transport? Then again, how would we get out of the solar system without Tink's ship, either? I swallowed hard. I didn't like that thought. Negative thoughts led to negative actions, and for the here and now, I needed to remain positive. Besides, we had a mission to fulfil first. We had to find Callum and Tink.

Zane held my hand and we headed for the huge outcrop, his grip warm and welcome. I knew that eternal's could only feed off humans when they had taken another human or human compatible being over. In their shadow form they

were sort of benign. I just hoped we didn't come across any before we found the others. I didn't fancy being Zane's food, having him cock-dock with me so the eternal within him could live. With Thomas it was different. I didn't know him. Not so with Zane. I loved him, and now that he had found Tink, he had so much to live for, too. Heck, we all had a lot to live for. I wanted to be with Callum forever. But being here, no matter how magnificent the view, struck fear right to the core of my being. A feeling that didn't bode well for any thoughts of the future.

I shook my head, trying to clear out such thoughts. To think like that wouldn't help. Zane and I walked across the crystalline ground. Funny enough, I didn't experience coolness underfoot as I would have thought. Were these crystals living like Tink's ship had been?

I didn't have time to contemplate such things. There was another pod, just where Zane had said it would be. Actually, there were two pods. One was on the ground at the base of the largest crystal. The other, much to my disappointment, was high up. Stuck between a branch where two crystals converged.

The pod at our feet opened. Out stepped Tink. Zane went to him. A long moment of roving hands across each other's bodies and deep resonant purring and moans of delight resulted.

Zane and Tink then kissed. The first time I had seen them do such a thing. It was wonderful to behold. They did it just how Callum and I did, all tongues and so much love that nothing else would have mattered to them.

But that meant one thing. Callum was high above us. How the hell were we going to get him down? The sides of the crystals were smooth, no footholds evident. I hoped with all my heart he didn't get scared and fall when he left his pod. I'd die if anything happened to him before we even got started.

Callum's pod opened.

"Callum!" I yelled out.

He emerged. In an instant, he must have realised his predicament and held onto the nearest crystal. "How the fuck am I going to get down from here?"

Tink and Zane had broken their kiss. Zane's lips were wet with moisture. He looked so hot, his skin a soft alabaster in the starlight. In fact, Callum looked just as wonderful, too. Even from this distance, his magnificent genitals and toned body clear for all to see. I was so glad he was mine.

"You will have to jump. Come Callum. Tink will catch you. But don't forget to press that panel next to the view screen. Must not let eternal have phase technology."

We all watched as Callum did as instructed.

When completed, his pod was no longer stuck because it had disappeared into the ether, he stood up. "You sure you can catch me, Tink?"

"Tink is sure."

Callum closed his eyelids, taking in a deep breath for a moment. He then opened them. A look of horror struck his face.

"What's the matter, Callum?" I called out. Was he too scared to jump? Sure, he was high above us, but if Tink said he could catch him, then really, what other choice did he have? We had no rope. No ladder. Heck, we didn't even have clothes.

"Look!" Callum had drained white. He was gesturing to a point behind us. "An eternal!"

I turned. At first I couldn't see anything. Just more outcrops of crystals beyond the clearing where my pod had landed. Then, as I scanned the landscape before me, something moved, caught in my peripheral vision. It took me a while to focus on the place where I had seen the movement. When I did, what I saw was without a shadow of doubt, the most frightening thing I had ever seen. An eternal approached, dark and menacing. A macabre sight, one that sent shivers down my spine. It's form only just visible amongst the reflected light of the crystals around us. Actually, to see it required looking in between the light, for it resided amongst the shadows.

The eternal came at us with caution, measuring

every move. How Callum had seen it was a miracle, but there was no doubt. We were no longer alone in the crystal forest.

“Fuck, I see it!” Zane proclaimed.

Visions of my time spent with Thomas came flooding back. How I had been used, manipulated, and above all, became food for a being that held no regard for us at all. As Tink had said, we were prey...or cattle.

Tink hissed. His fur stood on end and he had planted his ears firm against his head. His tail swished. He stepped forward, gesturing for us to stay where we were. I wasn't going to argue. Zane came to me and together we stood hand in hand as we watched Tink charge for the eternal, a battle cry piercing the still night air.

In a blink of an eye, the cat being unretracted his claws. They were long, like rapier knives on the end of his fingers. I most certainly wouldn't have wanted to feel the sharp ends of them. He slashed at the air as he ran.

There was a cry, one that sent a shiver through my soul, affecting me on a deep level. I had heard it before. The scream was the agony of defeat and the last breath of life leaving the eternal, the leech of humanity. Tink's claws had sliced the being into many pieces. Fuck he was amazing. The thing didn't stand a chance.

“Man, I'm so going out with Wolverine or

somethin'."

"You love it," I said, realising I had let out a laugh. More from relief than anything else.

"You got that damn straight." Zane let me go. He ran to Tink. Again they were folded into each other's arms, sharing their new found love with more kisses and gropes. Tink had retracted his claws. Thank God. I wouldn't want Zane to become instant sushi just like the eternal.

"Um, hey, haven't you all forgotten something?" Callum called out from above.

Tink must have heard Callum. He was next to me in no time flat holding out his arms. He said, "Now jump. Tink will catch you. Tink won't let anything happen to his beautiful new friend."

Again Callum went for the dramatics. He jiggled his hands at his sides, sucked in the air and closed his eyelids tight. I think he loved all the attention. I'm sure he thought he was about to dive for Australia at the Olympics or something the way he was carrying on.

"Just hurry up," I said. But not with impatience. Far from it. I wanted Callum in my arms. I wanted to lavish kisses all over his lips, get hard thinking of all the things we'd do together when he was safe. Watching Zane and Tink share their love only made things worse. I yearned for my Callum all the more.

"Okay. Okay." And with that he jumped.

The most amazing thing happened next. Tink sprang from a dead stand still too high up into the air. He then landed his feet onto the side of the huge crystal, using it as a springboard to jump even higher.

As Callum fell, Tink caught him in mid-air. Curling around him and holding him tight. Another moment later, Tink landed with a roll. Callum emerged unscathed. Zane and I ran to them. All hugs and thankful kisses upon each other resulted. Tink purred loud and Zane and Callum smiled. God I loved them all.

"We must go to the crystal cavern located about two kelks north of here. That is where I left Lionel," Tink said. He had grabbed Zane's hand and was now walking away from us toward his pod. "He will be expecting us."

"How are we going to get there without more of those eternal dudes chasing us all the way?" Zane asked. "I mean, fuck me, those things scare the bejesus outta me."

"Tink, too." Tink pressed the self-destruct on his pod. It was gone a second after that.

"Yeah, but you got claws and shit. I've got nothin' other than my cock. What am I gonna do, turkey slap any eternal to death?"

Tink laughed, one accompanied by more purring. "Don't do that, my beautiful Zane. I don't want you damaged in any way. Tink wants to

have you lots and lots of times. Tink loves all of Zane just how he is."

Callum laughed, too. "Yeah, I couldn't think of any better way to go than by being pounded by your meat, Zane."

Zane gave that cheeky smile of his. "You'll get more, too, don't you fret, Cals."

I was about to join in, offer a quip to help lighten the mood some more, when Tink's laughter stopped. He said, "But Tink is just as vulnerable. Without the ship cannot phase shift. Shifting phase is a better defence. Eternals cannot merge with spirit folk when we aren't solid. Can when we are whole like Tink is now. We must be careful."

I hadn't noticed before, but Tink was right. Since he had emerged from the pod, he had been in solid form. Seemed the only way we had of defending ourselves was Tink's claws. I made a mental note to make sure I stayed as close to Tink as I possibly could.

"Well, what are we waiting for then? Mister B needs some rescuing and there's gonna be some eternals skulls to crack in the process. What more could you ask for, hey?"

This time I laughed. There was Zane, all knight in shining armour, back to his old self. But this time I really did feel more comforted by his words. The main reason being, there was another

brave soul amongst us. A handsome and athletic cat being named Tink. I was sure thankful for that.

Tink and Zane led the way.

Chapter Ten

The expanse of the crystal forest became even more apparent once we were free of the clearing. We had landed on a knoll and below us was the most awesome sight I had ever seen. For as far as the eye could see, even beyond the horizon, the forest continued. It seemed to go on forever.

We traversed down the slope. Soon we were surrounded by so much crystal I could no longer tell when one grouping began and another ended. It also came to my realisation that walking barefoot across crystal shards wasn't such a good idea. I would kill for shoes right about now. My feet were covered in tiny cuts and they ached like hell.

Tink tried to pick out the smoothest path, but soon, all of us had bloody feet. Callum had gripped me tight. He hissed through his teeth many times. I couldn't blame him. The cuts were small, but fuck, they stung. I just hoped two kelks wasn't a fair distance and that we'd be at the caves

real soon.

"Not much farther," Tink said. "Keep an eye on the shadows. We are no longer in barren lands. Eternals will be about. That much is certain."

"How can you tell? Everything all looks the same," I blurted without thought.

"The crystals are now hexagonal," was his rather curious answer.

"I don't understand," Callum said.

"Hexagonal crystals are like eternal homes. We must be careful."

"Oh, just fucking brilliant. Here we are walking down Main Street of eternal central. My god, we're so dead, aren't we?" Callum said, again squeezing my hand tight.

But Callum was right. Every crystal around us, from the smallest about waist height, to the largest that went so high I couldn't see the peak, was hexagonal.

Tink stopped. "It is night. Even an eternal must sleep. Remember, without a host they are mostly dormant. But we must be quiet. Why do you think Tink programmed the pods for the dark side?"

Zane ran his hand along Tink's back, moving down so he could grope his cute arse and touch his long tail. "Because Tinkles is amazing, that's why."

"He sure is," Callum said.

I couldn't agree more. Being in this place, so

deathly silent but beautiful at the same time, was made all that much better by the fact Tink was here to guide us. He was amazing, and I could certainly see why Zane had fallen so deep for him. Heck, if I wasn't with Callum, I'd have done the same.

For the longest time we walked in silence, all of us now hand in hand. We kept to the smoothest path, but at the same time, tried to keep out of sight by hugging the bases of the crystal towers as best we could. A few times I thought I saw an eternal move, but when I turned to gaze at the spot to be certain, I couldn't see anything. Perhaps I was imagining movement in the shadows. Then again, I doubted it.

If any of the others had noticed an eternal, they didn't say. I supposed drawing attention to ourselves now would prove useless, even if it was to kill an eternal that may be stalking us. Actually, scratch that. I was certain an eternal was stalking us.

"I think we're being followed," I whispered to no one in particular. I didn't want to alarm anyone, especially not Callum, but at the same time I had to let them know. A surprise attack would be that last thing we'd need right now.

"Two eternals have been with us since we left the clearing," Tink said, "Possibly more."

His words scared the spit out of me. I felt

queasy. Now it was my turn to squeeze Callum's hand. Heck, I squeezed Zane's, too. They both nodded, understanding the weight of the situation and my concern. Sure, Tink could slice eternal's to pieces, but that was one on one. How would he fair with two or more against him? For that matter, what could we do to help if that situation ever came up, which I'm sure it would?

All of a sudden I felt even more vulnerable than I did before, my nakedness not helping any. I'm sure the sight of my cock wagging about as I walked at best speed through their crystal metropolis was like a magnet to the eternal's, and not in a nice way, either. I feared for my safety for the first time since we landed on the planet. Yes, before I knew we were heading into the eternal's home world, but now this was the real deal.

We were being hunted.

I swallowed hard. Tink had picked up the pace, leading us on and no longer concerned with the smoothness of our path. The hexagonal crystals thinned, replaced by square and octagonal ones. I guessed we were no longer in an eternal city. Again the crystals were magnificent. Some were so many colours I became dazzled. Then I realised why. Dawn was approaching.

"We must hurry. Eternal's will wake soon. Caves not as close as Tink would have liked."

I couldn't argue with that. "Are the eternal's still

hunting us?" I asked, too afraid to turn around, look anywhere but forward.

"Yes," Tink replied. "They will never give up."

I then had visions of us all being fought over. Hundreds upon hundreds of eternals savaging each other over which ones could claim us, like lions at a kill. But I also had many questions. Typical. Why couldn't I just accept our fate and be done with it? "How do eternals survive here if there isn't a food source readily available?"

"Not until they have a host are they living."

"These eternals are creeping me out more and more," Zane said.

I swallowed hard again. The one sliver of light in all of this was the fact that the caves were ahead of us. Then again, why couldn't the eternals just take us at the caves? What was so special about them anyway? More to the point, why was Mr. Barnaby safe from them there?

We were now running. I don't think Tink wanted to waste any more time. But my feet, cut and sore, throbbed unlike anything I had ever felt before in my life. I'm sure a shard had lodged itself right into the soft tissue of my sole, too. Soon, I was limping, pulled along by both Callum and Zane. How they weren't affected by the crystals I didn't know, but I was thankful. They were my support right now.

What seemed an eternity later, Tink said, "We

are here. My beautiful Zane. Callum. Jacob. We can rest."

"How can we rest with the eternal on our tail?" Callum asked.

"The caves are protected by a disruption field," Tink replied. "I put it there many moons ago so I could study the eternal. That is where I left Lionel. He is safe. Soon we will be."

I couldn't help but feel a small spark of hope ignite excitement within me. Perhaps we could make it, after all. "Run faster," I said with a gasp. The pain numbed me, but I didn't care. If the caves were safety, then with everything within me I would do my damndest to get there.

As we came down another knoll, the caves came into view. It was a magnificent structure and not how I imagined caves to be at all. Rather, a wall of crystal confronted us with a rainbow of colours that dazzled and amazed. At the base, numerous holes could be seen. Obviously they were the caves.

I ran as fast as my legs could carry me. Many times my feet slipped from underneath me, both from the smooth ground and the blood that oozed from the numerous cuts on my feet, acting like lubricant against the crystal. Callum and Zane and Tink helped me up. A few times I helped them up. Their feet were cut as bad as mine, too.

That small spark of hope was extinguished as

quick as it had been ignited. Ahead, and blocking our path, four eternal stood. Tink halted.

"Fuck!" Zane said, describing the situation down to a tee.

"Tink won't be able to fend off four of them. Too many. Too strong," Tink said with a growl.

I went close to the cat being and looked him in the eye. Those pretty golden and blue eyes of his welcomed me. "What can *we* do to help?"

Tink curled his lip with a concerned sneer. "Must not touch them. They will join with you then. Don't want to lose my beautiful Zane or his dear friends."

"But we've gotta be able to do somethin'" Zane said. "I'm not gonna let you kick eternal arse all by yourself. If we go down, we go down together. Deal?"

"Yes. But what can you do? You have no weapons." Tink came to embrace Zane, offering a gentle purr into his lover's ear.

Callum had picked up a large crystal shard, one shaped like a sword. He tapped the end of it into his other hand. Fuck he looked gorgeous. All sweaty and naked and handsome. My hero. My fucking hot as hell hero. "Will this do?"

Tink's face lit up with delight. "They are perfect."

I went to an outcrop and broke off a branch about the size of my arm. The thing snapped loud,

the bottom where I had broken it splintered and the body of the crystal dulled. No longer did it reflect the light. That proved one thing. The crystals were indeed living. I said, "But they'll be brittle. We'll only get to use them once, I'd say."

Zane came away from Tink, kissing him at the same time. "Then we throw the fuckers like spears."

When all of us were armed and Tink had unretracted those magnificent claws, we turned to look at our enemies. The four eternal were still there, watching with their cold onyx eyes. Standing like sentinels between us and the cave entrance.

Zane cried out something unintelligible as he flung a thin shard at one of the nearest eternal. The creature didn't move, still watching. Thankfully, it wouldn't be able to watch any more. The shard pierced it clean through the middle, shattering on the wall behind it. It slumped onto the crystal ground in an instant. "Now there're only three of you freaks to worry about."

"Well done, my beautiful Zane."

Zane smiled. "Go get 'em, tiger." He patted Tink on his backside. Tink charged.

Two eternal stepped forward, their goal the cat being and Zane. That left one. Callum and me could take it, I had no doubt.

"You want to throw yours first, baby?" I asked.

Callum slid his gaze over to me. "If we miss, we'll be defenceless."

He was right. A quick glance around confirmed his doubt. There weren't too many more crystals of a size we could pick up easily. Most were bigger than me and no doubt weighing a tonne. "Then we take it on hand to hand."

I ran, Callum beside me. The eternal stood its ground, watching us with those cold, dark eyes. My hatred for the thing intensified and I had visions in my mind of running it through. Then I'd watch the fucker die, laugh as it crumpled at my feet in agony, wailing out that final breath of defeat.

I readied the crystal by pointing the tip forward, like a lance. I screamed my war cry, a slur of words and sound, but one that would hopefully strike fear into the eternal. Then again, did they fear? I know Tink said they weren't alive as we knew it when they weren't in a host. Fuck it. Who cares? So long as the thing died well and good when I stabbed it, that's all that mattered.

Callum moved to create a bit of distance between us. I could see his plan. We were going to flank the thing. He would take one side, I'd take the other. Good idea. Hopefully, it'd just stand there confused while we wiped it from whatever existence it resided in.

"Die you bastard!" Callum said, also readying

his crystal sword.

When we were upon the eternal, and I was ready to thrust my weapon into its body, the thing moved. Like lightning it dodged my thrust and came upon Callum.

An instant later, Callum screamed as he swung his crystal at the eternal, all his effort reflected in his face. Again, the eternal dodged the attack.

“Callum!”

To my horror, Callum lost his balance and tripped on himself. The smooth ground near the caverns wouldn’t have offered much stability and he was on his arse within a blink of an eye. The crystal weapon he held was flung from his grip, shattering into a million pieces against an outcrop nearby. He was defenceless. Helpless. I had to get to him, and fast.

I ran with all my might. My weapon was ready. I didn’t care about the eternal, only for him. I had to kill it before it took my beautiful Callum as its host and then take us as its food. I screamed out again and again as I ran, raising the crystal high.

Callum was frozen to the spot, his gaze fixed upon the eternal who approached with slow and deliberate steps. The smugness of the thing, the arrogance, was clear. Callum’s eyes were wide, his mouth agape. He would have been scared out of his mind. The fact that he released the contents of his bladder reinforced just how petrified he was. I

couldn't blame him.

The situation was desperate. I decided to throw the crystal, if only to gain enough time so we could both arm ourselves again. Before I could lift the weapon up, no easy task considering I was trying to halt myself from my sprint, Mr. Barnaby came into view. He must have come from the cavern, watching events unfold and deciding to come and help. I don't know how Tink and Zane were dealing with the other two eternal, but Mr. Barnaby must have thought our need greater. He ran toward us. He was naked and I couldn't help but notice he was a lot thinner, fitter even. Being away from the General Store had done him good.

"Callum! Watch out!" the old man called out.

The eternal was now standing over Callum. My fiancé, my beautiful and handsome man and the light of my life, was about to be taken unless I killed that disgusting thing who had disarmed him. As I yelled out, more from panic than anything, the eternal moved like lightning again. So fast my eyes couldn't focus on its journey across the crystal ground.

Its target wasn't Callum after all. Heck, it wasn't even interested in me. The eternal must have had another agenda. One that had now come to fruition.

Mr. Barnaby was taken as a host.

Chapter Eleven

Mr. Barnaby had slumped onto the ground. I dropped the crystal. It shattered at my feet.

"Fuckin' hell, Mister B!" Zane came to me. I could see he was close to tears. I know, I was, too.

Tink joined us as well. I take it that he had dispensed with the other two eternal. But all that didn't really matter. One of us had been taken. One of us had lost their life to a monster.

"We must get Lionel into the cavern." Tink said.

I hated to say what I said next, but really, I couldn't think of Mr. Barnaby as the man I had grown to love like a father figure. He was an eternal now. A living, breathing eternal in the form of Mr. Barnaby. "But how can we take him in there? Won't the disruption field kill the eternal and therefore Mr. Barnaby?"

Tink's tail flicked and his ears were pressed against his head. "The field only works on the shadow form of the eternal. When they are with host they are shielded. We must get into the

cavern. If only to prevent more eternals from taking us."

"But mister B...he's...he's lost to us unless we can get that fucker out of him," Zane said. A tear tumbled down his cheek. He didn't bother to wipe his face.

Tink embraced him. "We will find a way to help him. But we must hurry. Eternals know we are here now. Soon there will be too many to deal with."

I helped Callum to his feet. We held each other. "I'm so glad you're safe," I said, lavishing kisses all over him.

"I was so scared, Jacob. But...but all our efforts have been for nothing, haven't they? Mr. Barnaby...my God, he's one of them now. What are we going to do?"

"Tink's right. We've got to think of ourselves for the moment. We'll worry about getting that thing out of Mr. Barnaby when we've come up with a plan. I'm sure Tink can help us with that."

"I hope you're right."

Tink gestured for us all to help drag Mr. Barnaby into the cavern. He was unconscious. I wouldn't imagine he'd be out for long. The eternal would have taken hold and want to feed soon. That much I knew. In no time at all, we carried the old man into the cavern. Just as well. I could see movement amongst the dark places between the

crystals. Lots and lots of movement. If one thing was now certain, once we were inside we would be trapped. I sure hoped Tink had an escape plan.

Inside the cavern, there was nothing but what I could describe as beauty all around us. The crystals were spectacular. All colours permeated their form to bathe us in a wonderful light, especially since dawn had broken. I could see why Tink chose the place to study the eternal. The cavern was awesome.

In the middle of the cavern there was a machine, lights all over it. It was organic and sort of looked like a tree trunk. It didn't take a genius to work out that it was the disruptor. It hummed, too.

"We must tie Lionel up," Tink said, sadness filled his words. "Then we must talk. I do have a plan. But you may not like it."

We all looked at Tink.

Zane said, "This is all fucked up, if you ask me. What's there to like about this *situation* anyway, Tinkles?"

"Don't worry, my beautiful Zane. While Tink is here, you will all be safe. I promise with all my heart. The plan will work. But we must be patient. We must be careful."

Somehow I took a small vestige of hope from his words. Zane smiled, even though his face was streaked with his tears. I knew he admired Mr.

Barnaby, thought of him as family. Heck, we all did.

We placed Mr. Barnaby so he was propped up by an outcrop of crystal. Tink had gone over to the disruptor. For the first time I noticed there was a chest-like thing behind it. From the trunk or whatever it was, Tink pulled out some organic looking rope. Within moments, and not a second to spare because Mr. Barnaby was waking, we tied him up. My stomach turned and I couldn't help but get emotional, just like Zane, as I tightened the knot to secure his feet. Feet that had cuts all over them like ours did.

Mr. Barnaby's eyelids flicked open. I jumped. All of us stepped away from him. "Ah, I see my company looks most delicious." Mr. Barnaby said, the words not his but the thing inside him. I shuddered and reached out to take Callum's hand. He reciprocated. But the eternal continued, "And just so you know, these bonds won't hold me forever."

I swallowed hard. "We'll save you, Mr. Barnaby," I said, but the confidence in my words had melted away. The sight of my dear friend, testing the strength of the ropes and smiling maliciously, struck fear through me. All seemed lost for Mr. Barnaby.

Tink said, "I think we should talk out of earshot. Eternal mustn't know our plan."

"Plan? How interesting," the eternal said.

"Shut the fuck up," Zane spat. "Just get out of him so I can kill you with my bare hands, you bastard."

Tink grabbed Zane around his waist, pulling him close. "Don't let him upset you. That is *its* plan. Fear and doubt its greatest weapons."

The eternal continued, "How lucky am I? I have so much food to choose from. A veritable menu, I must say. There is the famous eternal killer and King of a dragon clan, Jacob. There is his partner. A nice morsel if I ever saw one. Oh, and a spirit folk, too. And yes, there is Zane. One I will savour the most of all because I know this form once meant something to you, more so than the others. But know this now, all of you. I will enjoy my feast no matter what. I will enjoy watching you all scream for mercy as I drain the energy of your lives..."

Tink pulled us all away while the eternal blathered on. The cavern had a smaller chamber near the back wall. It was in there Tink took us – patted us all reassuringly on our backsides as we passed.

"Now we can talk. Sit. Make yourselves comfortable. This room has food and drink and a place to relieve, too." Tink gestured to an organic machine. There was also a small doorway beyond that. I assumed that's where the toilet was.

For the first time in a long while, I realised I was indeed hungry. When was my last meal? I know Zane made us that dinner at the lighthouse, but how long ago was that? It seemed like an eternity.

“So what’s the plan?” I asked, sitting so Callum was in front of me and I could wrap my legs around him. The smell of him, his manly sweat, soon filled my nostrils and I took him in with relish. Sure, we all needed a shower or something, but at the moment that was the last thing on my mind. I wanted to hear what Tink had to say.

Tink took in a deep breath. “We must not let Lionel die.” Oh, fuck. I knew straight away where this was going. No wonder the cat being said we wouldn’t like his plan. But he was also right. Nothing, not even an eternal within him, must hurt him. Tink continued, “There are no mirrors here. Crystals die once they are taken from their growth. The only thing we can do is let Tink call his other ship. Then we can extract the eternal with spirit folk technology.”

Zane had sat so he was wrapped in Tink’s arms, facing him. He looked up to his lover and said, “Cool. We’ll do that. Sounds like a plan to me.”

Tink ran his hand through Zane’s hair, purring filled the air. “My beautiful Zane, I wish it was that simple.”

“What do you mean, Tink?” Callum asked.

Again Tink took in a deep breath. "The ship is four cycles away."

"What's a cycle?" Callum added.

But I already had a nasty feeling I knew the answer. Tink's next words confirmed my fears. "A cycle is twenty-four of your Earth hours."

It didn't take Einstein to work out what Tink was saying. We couldn't let anything happen to Mr. Barnaby. Yet, at the same time, we couldn't get the eternal out of him, not without mirrors. From the way Tink was talking, there would be such a thing on his ship.

"Um, I don't like the sound of this, Tinkles," Zane said.

Zane had caught on. We'd be stuck in this cavern until the other ship arrived in about four day's time. I also knew, from past experience with Thomas, that an eternal had to feed at least once a day. If an eternal didn't feed, then the host would wither away and die and its shadow form would be free to take another. Sure, last time I dealt with an eternal, Thomas jumped into the Longmuir to drown the thing, sacrificing himself in the process. I didn't see any water around us. In fact, I didn't see any way of getting that thing out of Mr. Barnaby. Not without hurting him. My stomach turned.

"You are right, my beautiful Zane. Lionel must not die or be harmed in any way. He means too

much to us all. We have no choice. We are going to have to take turns feeding the eternal. A day each."

"What did you say?" Callum blurted. He turned around to look at me. Fear once more etched into his eyes. Again, I knew exactly how he felt. Actually, I knew more than that. Callum hadn't been eternal food before. I had.

I kissed him, then replied on Tink's behalf, "We're going to have to keep the eternal alive so Mr. Barnaby will have a fighting chance when we try and exorcise it from him."

"Exactly," Tink said. "All of us must help each other. Make the feeding as safe as possible. Otherwise we could become lost in the eternal's snare."

Again Callum looked puzzled, as did Zane. Again, I clarified. "He means we've only got to give the eternal enough to keep Mr. Barnaby alive."

"How are we going to do that?" Callum whispered, his voice breaking up, filled with emotion.

"I don't know," I said with all honesty.

Chapter Twelve

Tink stood up. He paced the chamber. All of us watched him with intent, Zane more so. “We must be there to support each other. Comfort each other after the feeding. Make love. That way any influence will be washed away. Freeing the mind once more of the one who has fed it. But it will be difficult. Eternals are cunning. They will stop at nothing to make sure their food can be sustained. Including planting doubt and fear into every thought, past, present and future. Powerful weapons.”

“You were right when you said we weren’t going to like the plan,” I said. But I couldn’t think of any other way. The thought of being food again chilled me to my soul. But really, Mr. Barnaby was all who mattered here. We just had to buy the time needed until the ship arrived. This was going to be one hell of a long four days. The longest of my life, I’m sure.

“Tink will set up the homing beacon. Zane, my beautiful, you can help me.”

Zane sprung to his feet. "Sure thing."

"Callum. Jacob. Eat and rest. When I have done what is needed, we must decide who will feed the eternal first." And with that Tink left the chamber hand in hand with Zane.

Callum came around to embrace me, and for the longest time we held each other. No words were needed between us. We knew what we had to do. We also knew the consequences. If we didn't feed the eternal, Mr. Barnaby would die. If we did, we ran the risk of falling under its influence, a danger to the others. We were fucked, and we had four days to enjoy the hell of the predicament we had found ourselves in.

Finally, I said, "I'm glad I'm with you, Callum. I love you so much."

Without hesitation, he said, "I love you, too. With all my heart and all my soul."

We kissed. A kiss that lasted an eternity. My mind spun, my thoughts swimming in his delight. I was caught up in his touch, his taste, his roving tongue, and the gentle moans he offered. But above all, I was lost in his love. Maybe Tink was right. After feeding the eternal, making love to those we cared about would bring us back from any influence. I sure hoped so. I knew firsthand how an eternal could manipulate the timeline of its food's life to its advantage. Not something easily combated.

While still in Callum's embrace, but no longer locked in his kiss, Tink and Zane returned.

"It's done," Zane said, his voice sombre.

"I will get us all some refreshments. Then we must decide," Tink said.

Tink didn't use the word *food*. I couldn't blame him. That word now had a terrible meaning. Callum let me go. All of us were soon at the organic dispenser, watching Tink press panels. What came out of the machine was interesting to say the least. Weird shaped things of all colours and shapes filled a large plate. I assumed they would be edible.

Moments later, we were all seated once more. This time we formed a circle around the plate, making it easier to share our meal. I picked up an orange looking thing. It tasted nothing like the fruit of its colour. Instead it was thick and chewy, like a meat ball only more fibrous. To my surprise, it was rather bland. Still, it filled a gap and once I had consumed it, my hunger abated.

"Do we draw straws or somethin'?" Zane questioned, his mouth full of half masticated food, his chin covered in blue juice from the eggplant-like fruit he was devouring with gusto. He was obviously eager to get the whole *pick the food for the eternal* thing over and done with. So was I, the truth be told.

"I'll go first," Callum said. "I mean, we've all

got to do it anyway, might as well get my turn over and done with."

"You sure?" I questioned, reaching out to touch him, run my hand over his back.

"I'm sick of being the scaredy-cat. No offence, Tink."

Tink tilted his head. Acknowledging that he understood and wasn't offended.

I ran my hand along his back, feeling his muscles, his skin. "But we're not asking for bravery here, Callum. We're...shit, you're right. We've all got to do it. But I—well, I don't want anything to happen to you?"

He looked me in the eye. He was on the verge of tears. "You'll be there for me when I've finished feeding the bastard, won't you."

I embraced him. "Oh, fuck you know I will be. I'd do anything for you."

"Good. That's settled. Who will be next?" Tink asked. Not in a heartless way, not at all. We had to know. If only to prepare ourselves.

"I'll go next," Zane said. "But I so want to get some lovin' when I'm finished."

That left me and Tink. I didn't think it was a good idea for Tink to feed the eternal until the last minute. I mean, maybe the eternal might think that a spirit folk being would be an opportunity it couldn't refuse. Maybe it might change hosts once Tink joined with it. Then we'd be fucked for sure.

The ship and all the technology of his race at the eternal's disposal. "I'll go after Zane," I said.

"Tink will go last," Tink said. "Hopefully the ship can get here sooner."

I think the cat being also knew what I suspected, but chose not to mention it. Any more panic amongst us now would prove more harmful than constructive. If Zane and Callum knew that one of us might have to feed the eternal a second time because the risk was too great for Tink to do it, I think it would be the end of any hope. Feeding an eternal once was scary enough. Twice could mean being unable to break free from its influence. A slave to the eternal's will.

"So when do I do it?" Callum asked.

"Whenever you want," was Tink's reply. "We will all be there with you."

Callum looked at me. I let go of him and he stood up. "No time like the present then."

I stood up, too. Taking Callum by his hand, squeezing him tight to let him know I was there for him. Tink and Zane stood, too. We all looked at each other. I got the terrible feeling that none of us would be the same again.

Soon, all four of us were in the main chamber. The disruptor machine had changed in appearance. It had a bulbous bit attached to it with a light at the top that alternated rhythmically between off and on. I sure hope the ship could get

here a lot quicker than four days.

As soon as we were close to Mr. Barnaby, he said, "Who will be the first you'll sacrifice in your feeble attempt to preserve the life of the human I have taken from you? Who will be the first delicious little lamb to the slaughter, hmm?"

My stomach turned when Tink loosened the ropes around Mr. Barnaby's legs. With deftness and as quick as I had ever seen, the cat being parted the old man's legs, tying one leg to one outcrop, the other to another. It was clear what he was doing. He was securing the eternal so that we could feed him easier. Mr. Barnaby's genitals exposed and ready, his legs wide open.

Callum stepped forward when Tink was done.

"Ah, the morsel is first. How nice. An appetiser for me to enjoy. Oh, you are all so thoughtful..."

The eternal went on an on. I tried my best to ignore it. I knew it was playing mind games, attempting to fill us all with fear so we'd be easier to control. "Don't listen to it," I whispered into Callum's ear.

Callum's face had hardened. A look of determination had overtaken him. Fuck he was amazing. I'd be scared out of my mind. Then again, I knew what to expect. He didn't.

"You only have to touch urethral openings for the transfer to work," Tink began. "Don't dock, Callum, my beautiful friend. Don't roll your

foreskin over Lionel's in any way. We may have to pull you away quickly. We don't want you hurt."

"Won't he need some lubrication?" I questioned, remembering the clear fluid that flowed free from my cock when Thomas fed off me.

Tink nodded. "Yes. Zane, my beautiful, you can help milk out some pre-ejaculate. Jacob, you will hold your lover's penis when he is feeding so he doesn't get the opportunity to dock. The eternal will want that. The eternal will want to try and secure him so he can take what he wants. Tink will hold Lionel."

"Just get on with it," Mr. Barnaby snapped. I could tell by his sudden impatience that the eternal within him was hungry. I was glad he was tied up. Thomas got violent when he wanted to be fed. "*The human* is mine. Give him to me."

To my horror, Mr. Barnaby had an erection. I didn't want to look at it, but couldn't help myself. Some things were best left unknown, and seeing an old man and a dear friend with a boner was one of those things. I felt dirty.

Zane was on his knees, jerking Callum off, doing as he was instructed. Then again, such a thing wouldn't have been a chore. In fact, Zane took Callum's cock into his mouth a few times, using his tongue to make sure he was well lubricated. Callum was erect in seconds, his cock

slick with both his and Zane's fluids.

Tink had grabbed Mr. Barnaby's cock. He had retracted his foreskin. The man's head was so swollen that his piss slit dribbled pre-cum like tears. No encouragement was needed. The eternal was ready. The look of hunger and lust stained Mr. Barnaby's face. I felt sick.

"I'm ready," Callum whispered.

Zane got up off the ground. I urged Callum toward the eternal with one hand behind my lover's back. With the other I grabbed his cock. The heat of his dick, the tightness of his hardness and the sight of the veins that fed his erection were so magnificent I couldn't help but gasp. I so wanted him right now. But first we had to feed the eternal. No easy task, not even with the help of all of us around him. When it came down to it, he'd be all alone. I just hope we could pull him out in time.

Callum's foreskin had retracted of its own accord, but I made sure I pulled on the root of his cock, keeping the skin as tight as possible. I wanted to reduce the chances of anything going wrong.

"Zane, my beautiful, hold Callum's hands behind his back," Tink instructed. "Jacob, ease him to a kneel. We must do this as a team. We must not let the eternal take too much."

A short time later, Callum was in position

between Mr. Barnaby's legs. Their cocks close to each other.

"On the count of three bring their cocks together. Let their openings touch but don't let anything else happen. If it does, pull him away. Clear?" Tink's voice was desperate. I know he sounded all confident, but really, none of us had ever done anything like this before.

We were all in place.

Zane was behind Callum, holding his hands behind his back and ready to pull him away at a moment's notice. It was now or never. I pulled down on Callum's cock so he could make contact with Mr. Barnaby's.

"I can't wait to taste you, my little lamb," the eternal said, a crooked snarl upon its lips.

I kissed Callum on his cheek. "You sure you're ready, baby?" Callum had softened, probably more from fear than anything else. I moved my hand along his length, keeping up with the stimulation in the hope that he would get as hard as possible before he fed the eternal. The harder the better, the transfer easier when excited.

"Just do it," he said with a voice so soft I barely caught it.

He had hardened. Tink and I worked together, bringing their cocks together so that their piss slits touched. The split second their sensitive skin came in contact, Callum's whole body jolted, like he had

been electrocuted.

"Ah, yes. So tasty!" the eternal said, sucking in the air. Its enjoyment clear.

Callum screamed out. He was sweating, his face filled with both terror and pain. He continued to shudder and many times I had to pull on his cock to keep the contact. I hope I wasn't hurting him.

"Stop him from pulling away too soon, Zane," I said with a voice harsher than I intended. We had to make sure the eternal got enough to keep Mr. Barnaby alive, but at the same time not too much so he could influence Callum. But how much was enough?

"I'm tryin'. I'm tryin'," Zane yelled out over Callum's screams. But fuck me, this ain't easy with him buckin' about all over the place."

The arc of energy was plain to see between them. The transfer of Callum's life energy came fast, entering Mr Barnaby through his piss slit to feed the eternal within. I'd never seen such a thing. When I fed the eternal, our foreskin covered our heads, so I never got to see the energy. Not so now. It was frightening to witness.

"When you feel like you need to urinate, call out. That is when you have given it enough," Tink shouted.

Callum kept on shuddering, every muscle within him taught. His stomach quivered and he

had thrown back his head. I hoped with all my heart that Callum had heard him. How else were we going to know when to stop?

Again, memories of Thomas flooded my mind. Tink was right. Many times during our feeding my bladder felt like it was going to explode. Heck, if I knew that was the sign to break away, maybe I could have saved myself. Then again, I didn't have the help Callum had right now.

He got harder. Pre-cum flowed from his cock and my hand was wet with his fluids. But I had to make sure he remained retracted. If the join could be sealed it would be harder for Callum to come away.

"Now!" Callum yelled amongst his screaming. "Now! Now! Now!"

I didn't hesitate. I let go of his cock. It sprung up, helped by his erection. At the same time Zane pulled at him, forcing him backwards as quick as possible and away from the eternal inside Mr. Barnaby.

"No! I need more. Give me more of my little lamb."

We had succeeded. Callum was wet with sweat, a sheen covered his skin. He was panting, too. Zane was underneath him, still holding him tight. The only thing I cared about was the fact that Callum was all right and that he had survived the ordeal. I went to him.

Callum's eyelids opened when I came over him. With a hoarse voice and eyes that pleaded, he said, "Hold...me...Jacob."

Chapter Thirteen

Zane kept his hold upon Callum while I embraced him tight. We sandwiched him, and I'm sure he wouldn't have minded. He was still erect.

"We're all here for you, baby," I whispered before I kissed him on his heated lips. His taste was strong, salty and tangy. I loved it. A long moment later I parted so I could stare deep into his fantastic blue eyes.

Tink came to join us. "You were fantastic, my beautiful friend Callum."

Callum nodded. A smile then formed on his lips. "I want my reward now. I never want to do that again...he showed me things I...oh fuck. I just can't explain. He is evil. Pure fucking evil." For a moment Callum's gaze wandered. I could see what Tink meant. We had to be here for him to help keep him from falling under the eternal's influence.

I pressed my fingers against his lips. "Shh. Zane and Tink and me are here for you now."

"Open your legs, Cals," Zane said. "I'm hot and hard and seein' as I'm already underneath you, might as well make the most of it, hey?"

Callum did as asked. It was true. Zane was ready, his erection such a magnificent sight. Tink came around to help Zane get inside Callum, feeling his balls and purring away as he worked.

A moment later, Callum gasped. He had been entered. That look of delight on his face clear and one he always got when he was filled with cock.

"You like that, Cals?"

"Oh, yeah," Callum said with more gasps and a quiver of his stomach as Zane began his rhythm.

I didn't waste any time. I went down on him. Licking his chest and rolling my tongue around his nipples before I kissed his trembling stomach and took his cock into my mouth.

He tasted bitter at first. Probably a residual effect of the energy transfer. Still, he was magnificent and I took in as much of him as I could, my lips right down to the root of him.

"Tink. I want to suck you off." Callum groaned. I knew he liked what I did to him. He loved it when my nose touched his tattoo garland. I loved it, too. Although, I had to manoeuvre so his cock didn't tickle my uvula. I didn't want to gag. Not a good look chucking up all over my fiancé.

The cat being, hard as the rest of us, came to kneel next to Callum. I could see now that our

affection had worked. No longer did Callum look lost. No longer did he have the appearance of someone who had been drained. The way he took Tink's cock into his mouth, with enthusiasm and love, proof the plan had worked.

We continued to lavish our love on Callum for the longest time. In the distance I could hear the eternal yell obscenities. But I didn't care. We had fed it and Mr. Barnaby would be alive for another day. We had also saved Callum. My brave and wonderful man. Sure, he may be the first to show how scared he was when something terrible had happened, but that was who he was. I wouldn't change him for anything.

Soon my mouth was filled with his cum, most shooting straight down my throat. When I came away I saw that Tink had blown his load, too. Callum's lips and chin covered in his sticky white fluid.

Then Zane let out a gasp. He was done, too.

"Come here, Jacob," Callum said. I knew what he wanted. He wanted to taste me, too. Let me orgasm in his mouth as well. Yep. Callum was back to normal and I couldn't help but smile with so much warmth and admiration as he opened his mouth and took in as much of my erection as he could. I blew a short time later, one filled with relief and joy. Fuck, I gave him heaps. But he swallowed it all, those beautiful eyes looking up at

me as I pumped more and more into his mouth.

We had succeeded in making sure the eternal couldn't influence Callum. To tell the truth I enjoyed the therapy. I just hoped that when it came to my turn, things would be as easy.

A few hours later, we all met in the small chamber after we had shared more of our love on the deepest level. That and plenty of body fluids, too. Tink had prepared some more food, another large tray of assorted things, and again I realised I was as hungry as hell.

"You will be next to feed the eternal, my beautiful Zane," Tink purred, running his hands all over him. "I don't want it. But we must for Lionel's sake."

"Well, at least I know what to expect now."

Tink clicked his tongue. "But the eternal will be more cunning next time. It will be harder to resist him. Even with Tink and your beautiful friends by your side. I do worry about you."

Zane nodded, letting Tink take him up in his arms. "Mister B can't die. It's as simple as that. 'Sides, he'd do the same for us without hesitation."

"You are so brave." Tink kissed Zane.

As I watched them share their affection for each other and Callum held me with just as much love, tiredness washed over me. The crystals around us no longer glowed as bright as they did. Was it

night again? Had we been in each other's arms that long?

"I'm beat," I said with a yawn and a stretch.

Tink broke their kiss. "Yes. We must rest. We will need all our strength. Beds are over there."

On the far wall of the chamber there was a nook. On the ground were blankets. Seemed we were all going to sleep together. I liked that idea. I mean, Zane and Callum and me were used to sleeping together. The addition of Tink would only add to that experience.

Although, I had to admit, the only thing on my mind right now *was* sleep. I think everyone else felt the same. We all clambered onto the blankets, my mind that wonderful cloudiness before my dreams swept me away.

My dreams weren't pleasant. In my mind I kept hearing voices. It was the eternal. He was taunting me. A few times throughout the night I sat bolt upright, drenched in sweat. Zane was the same. He was writhing and breathing hard while he slept. I bet the eternal was haunting his dreams, too.

Callum was the only one who slept with contentment on his face. Then again, he'd already done what was needed. He'd given a part of himself so Mr. Barnaby could live for another day. I'd be content, too, with that knowledge.

Jacob, my dear fellow, I'm hurting. Help me.

I swore that was the voice of the real Mr. Barnaby and not the eternal. Only the old man called me his *dear fellow*. The eternal had made it quite clear what he thought of us.

I got up. I don't know why, but without thinking what I was doing, I found myself in the main chamber. The starlight reflected through the crystals provided me with plenty of light.

There was Mr. Barnaby, breathing softly as he slept, the eternal waging war within him. Tink must have re-tied his bonds. No longer were his legs spread, but tied together how we had done when we first bound him. I supposed Tink wanted to make sure the old man was as comfortable as possible. After all, it wasn't Mr Barnaby's fault he had an eternal inside him.

Help me, Jacob. I'm hurting inside so much I can't stand it.

I wanted to reach out and touch him. Let him know on some level that I cared for him by loosening the ropes. Just a little. Sure, Mr. Barnaby may never remember anything that happened, but that was no excuse to behave like a monster. I reached out. Just a small touch. Surely, that wouldn't matter.

When my fingers were about to make contact on the knot of the rope at his feet, something caught my hand. I looked up. It was Zane. "Are you crazy?"

It took me a moment to realise what had happened. My mind clouded and my reason dissolved by Mr. Barnaby's plea inside my thoughts. "What?" was all I could manage.

"I've heard him, too. But, Jakey, we've got to be strong. Tink reckons the eternal will do anything to try and get what it wants. Includin' divide and conquer." Zane embraced me, his warmth bringing me back to the moment, strengthening my resolve. "Trust me, I feel for Mister B as much as anyone. I mean, fuck he's like the father I never had. But we can't let our emotions get in the way. What we're doin' is the best for him in the end."

I nodded. "Yeah. You're right. I just couldn't get him out of my head. Geez, this is going to be a mission lasting three more days, isn't it?"

"I hear that."

Zane led me back to the bed. Soon I was drifting off to sleep once more, but not before he kissed me goodnight and wrapped his arms around me tight. Fuck he was magnificent.

The next morning was uneventful. Other than the fact the eternal kept on screaming, claiming it was in pain and that we were murdering Mr. Barnaby by keeping him tied up. By about lunch time, the taunting stopped. Mr. Barnaby looked gaunt, the energy Callum had given him drained away.

We all knew what had to happen next.

I had spent most of the day by the mouth of the cavern, hand in hand with Callum. We watched as eternal moved back and forth. Some stopped to look at us, but most kept on with their business, whatever that was. Probably plans of a galaxy wide invasion or something. I shuddered. Dealing with one eternal was bad enough, more than that had proved to be a nightmare.

Tink called for us to be together in the large chamber by the disruptor homing beacon. What he said confirmed what I already knew, what all of us already knew. Damn it. Why couldn't this be easier? "Zane, my beautiful, it is time. Eternal needs your energy."

"Yeah, I figured as much," Zane said with a deep sigh.

We all knew what to do. Tink prepared Mr. Barnaby, again organising his bonds so that he could be accessed. Callum jerked Zane off with an eagerness I admired. Just like Zane did to him yesterday, Callum blew him as well. The gentle sound of him sucking and slurping filled the air. Zane was soon wet and hard, but more importantly, his foreskin was retracted.

Me? Well, I grabbed Zane's hands and secured them behind his back. They were sweaty. Zane was nervous and probably scared out of his mind, but unlike Callum, he hid it well. Not that there

was anything wrong with wearing one's heart on their sleeve. Callum was Callum and Zane was Zane. That's why I loved them both. They were special in their own right.

Zane was soon on his knees. Callum had done a fantastic job keeping him erect considering the circumstances. "I'm fuckin' as ready as I'm ever gonna be," he said.

I kissed him on his cheek while Callum pulled down on his cock so that he could touch with Mr. Barnaby a lot easier. Zane was huge, the main vein that fed his cock bulged, keeping him erect, his head nearly twice the size of the old man's. No wonder we gasped in sheer joy and pain when Zane fucked us.

"Keep pulling on his foreskin as tight as you can, baby," I said, not because Callum would forget such a thing, but because I needed to go through our procedures to make sure we were doing it in the right order and to keep Zane as safe as possible.

"Geez, Zane, your hood's so loose," Callum said as he pulled and pulled the best he could to keep Zane retracted, a job made more difficult by him being so wet, too. Zane's head dipped a bit, his frenulum pulled as tight as it would go, evidence that Callum was indeed doing the best he could.

"Yeah, but after all this I'm so goin' to gag you

with the fucker, ram my cock hard down your throat," he said with a cheeky smile, one filled with nervous energy and relieving the tension that had built up since we began preparing him.

"I'd like that," Callum replied.

What Callum had said was true, Zane was loose. He had plenty of foreskin, a physical feature that made him as sexy as all hell given any other circumstance. But not now. One slip of Callum's hand could give the eternal the opportunity it needed. If Zane's foreskin rolled over Mr. Barnaby's head, the join could be sealed. Pulling him away would then prove more difficult. Like Tink said. No one would be hurt. I couldn't agree more.

"Tink loves Zane just how he is," Tink said, holding up Mr. Barnaby's cock.

"Zane loves Tink."

"Just remember to let us know when your bladder aches. We will do the rest."

Zane nodded.

Callum and Tink then let Zane and Mr. Barnaby's cocks touch. Zane, like Callum had before, shuddered with so much violence it was hard to keep a hold of his hands behind his back. Callum gasped, desperate to keep his hold on Zane's cock, keep the connection while at the same time making sure he stayed retracted.

Again the energy sparked between them. Zane

screamed and screamed while his whole body convulsed, like he was in the throes of an epileptic fit or something. His eyes rolled in their sockets and spittle flew from his lips. This wasn't right. The feeding seemed more violent this time. Callum didn't react this severe to the feeding. What the fuck was going on?

Tink must have felt my concern. "The eternal will do anything to trick us. Keep hold of him. Don't stray from your duty. Zane, my beautiful must be safe."

Zane's body thrashed uncontrollably. If this was a tactic of the eternal, it very nearly worked. I was scared out of my mind. Zane voice was hoarse from his screams, but he continued to do so. Louder and louder. The whole cavern echoed with his agony. The one thing I did notice about the feeding this time was that the eternal kept quiet. A smirk all it offered.

I concentrated hard on keeping Zane's hands bound behind his back, making sure he couldn't complete the join and give the eternal everything he had if I let go, even though doing such a thing proved more difficult than I first thought. My grip had slipped a couple of times. Thankfully, I caught Zane's hands just in time.

Zane was strong.

He threw his weight around with so much force that his cock came away from Mr. Barnaby's on

several occasions. But the arc of energy remained. They were still connected by their pre-cum. The viscous fluid, produced in great quantities by both of them, acted like a bridge between their piss slits. The energy from Zane still fed the eternal.

Then it happened.

Zane broke free from my grip and kneed Callum in his groin. Callum let out a yelp and fell backwards onto his arse. But the scariest thing of all, he had let go of Zane's cock. I clambered to grab Zane. Tink screamed something incompressible and even though I didn't understand the words because Zane was yelling at the top of his lungs, I knew what to do.

I wrapped my arms around Zane in a bear hug and pulled him away.

Chapter Fourteen

I must have reacted just in time. Zane fell on top of me as I heaved with all of my might. Actually, he slumped on top of me. He was unconscious and a dead weight, too. But the fact remained, his foreskin hadn't prevented me from pulling him away from the eternal. He was safe, and I was thankful for that.

The next thing I knew, my legs felt warm. I craned my neck to see what was causing it. Zane had pissed all over himself. I sighed relief. Never before had I been so happy to see such a thing. It meant that he'd given the eternal enough to keep Mr. Barnaby alive for another day and that he was ready to be pulled away anyway.

Tink came over me. "You were wonderful, Jacob. You kept my beautiful Zane safe. Now we must show him how thankful we are for giving a part of himself to the eternal."

I couldn't agree more. But something else was on my mind. Callum was hurt. Zane's attack under the eternal's influence had been savage. He

was in the foetal position on the ground, holding his genitals, his face reflecting the pain all men knew all too well. "Sure thing, Tink. But first, I think Callum needs us, too."

"You are right. My beautiful Zane will be out for a while. We will tend to Callum. Then all of us must show our love for each other. Rid any lingering influence the eternal may have upon him."

"Now that's a deal," I lifted up my hand. "Can you pull me out of here? Zane's kind of a lump at the moment."

With Tink's help I was by Callum's side seconds later. "You okay, baby?"

He nodded. With a wince, he said, "Yeah. I never thought I'd say this in a million years, but can someone else be in charge of the cock holding next time?"

I couldn't help but chuckle. "Do you want me to kiss your balls better, baby?"

I helped Callum to his feet. He couldn't quite stand upright, but at least he was okay. "Sure thing...just give me a minute to get my breath back."

A scream from Zane pierced the air, echoing through the cavern, his pain coming to my ears over and over.

"My beautiful Zane is awake. Quick. We must comfort him. Bring him back from the eternal's

influence. Callum. Jacob. Quick!"

We went to Zane. He was thrashing his limbs just like he was during the feeding. Tink was trying his best to calm him, holding him and laying kisses over his sweat drenched forehead. Zane had drained white and he was staring up at nothing. Those big, beautiful brown eyes of his focused on nothing. I was terrified to see him like this. What if the eternal had damaged him permanently?

"The blood....so much blood. So much pain. Pain...so much pain. It's all my fault. The pain," Zane screamed out amongst so much gibberish it was clear he was fighting for his sanity. The eternal had done more than take his life energy. It had influenced his mind, too.

"Come and help. Callum. Jacob. We must let him know that he is safe. We must let him know he is loved. All of us must love him. It is the only way." Tink's voice sounded desperate and for the first time I had seen the cat being without confidence. He looked worried, his tail swishing the ground as he tried his best to comfort his lover.

Both Callum and I knelt down beside Zane.

"Zane, we're here, buddy," Callum said, running his hand across Zane's trembling stomach.

I kissed him on his cheek. "I love you, you know

that, Zane. Now come back to us. We all love you."

Zane screamed over and over. "...I murdered them...I murdered them...the pain. The blood is all over me. The pain. I murdered them and it's all my fault..."

I was struck with fear for him and felt so helpless as I caressed him. But the most horrific thing of all was that distant look in his eyes. He was lost in his own mind. I hoped with all my might and everything within me that the three of us could help him find his way back. I would die if anything happened to him.

Tink whispered his love over and over. So did Callum. All of us held him and comforted him. The common goal getting Zane back from the dark place the eternal had thrust upon him. I even tried to kiss him upon his lips, something that proved near on impossible considering he kept on sprouting incoherent words and writhed about like a fish on a hook. Zane was feverish. I would even say he was possessed. Whatever the eternal had planted into his mind, it was sure hard to break. Nevertheless, we kept at it. We had to. We made a promise to each other. No one will be hurt. No one.

Then I heard laughter.

I turned to look at the eternal. The joy had come from it, like a poison to stain the air. "Zane thinks

that he's murdered you all," it said to no one in particular. "I planted that experience into his mind. He tasted so delicious, but my oh my, he was so easy to manipulate."

Callum stood up, his fists clenched tight. "You're a fucking bastard!"

"Ah, my little lamb. One who begged for his life like a coward as he transferred his energy into me."

Callum lurched forward and I sprung to my feet, grabbing him around his waist, stopping him from doing anything foolish. "Don't, baby. He's trying to get a rise out of you."

"I *hate* it," Callum spat. But he relaxed, letting me hold him.

Zane's screams continued, along with the words that struck fear through me. I didn't have to have an imagination to know what Zane was going through. The eternal had manipulated him into believing he had killed us. Murdered us in cold blood. Something like that would be horrific. No wonder Zane couldn't be pulled away from the eternal's influence as easily as Callum had been.

Seemed the eternal hadn't finished either, "I would imagine you're next to feed me. Am I correct, Jacob, King of the dragon clan?"

"What's it to you, anyway?" Callum asked.

Again the eternal chuckled. "Oh, the little lamb

doesn't know, does he? Tell him Jacob. Tell him the truth."

Callum turned to look me in the eye. "What's he talking about, Jacob?"

I ran my hand along his back. "Nothing. Don't listen to it. It's trying to poison our minds, just like it's done with Zane."

"Tsk, ts. You know that's not true. If you won't tell him, I will."

"Just shut the fuck up," I snapped. I couldn't help it. The eternal knew what I knew, and that was a scary thought.

Callum came away from me. His eyes pleading. "It's not like you to get so upset. You're usually the calm one. What's going on?"

I grabbed both his hands and looked him in the eye. "Tink won't be able to feed the eternal." There I had said it. I should have spoken out sooner. After all, there shouldn't be any secrets between us. Now he knew.

"What?"

The eternal chuckled, and said, "Oh, do tell him so the dullard understands. He doesn't get it."

In that moment something struck me. Zane had stopped screaming. I craned my neck to look behind me. Tink had taken him up in his arms, cradling him and kissing him in between words of love and encouragement. Zane was in good hands and Tink's love for him was the strongest of all. It

was then I knew that the eternal hadn't succeeded in influencing Zane. He was safe.

"You've failed in taking Zane from us," I said.

"Do you really think he was my goal?"

Callum squeezed my hands. "Why can't Tink feed it? What's the thing talking about? Tell me, Jacob, tell me."

Again I looked him in the eye. "He's after Tink, that's why. It said it just then. If Tink feeds it, it'll leave Mr. Barnaby and enter him. Then the technology and life experience of Tink will be the eternals', too. They'll be more powerful than ever and it'll be our fault."

Callum's mouth opened. For the longest time he was silent. Finally, he asked, "So what does that mean? Mr. Barnaby can't die."

Slowly, I replied, "It means that one of us will have to feed the eternal twice."

"And I will look forward to that," the eternal said. "See you tomorrow, Jacob, King of the dragon clan. I will enjoy you most of all. I will..."

But I'd heard enough of its foul words. I kissed Callum, if only to let him know that I was sorry I'd kept information from him. He must have understood. A heart beat later, he reciprocated, sending his warm, wet tongue into my mouth to dance and chase my own.

When we parted, I said, "I'm sorry. I didn't want to alarm you, that's all."

He nodded and with a gentle touch I encouraged Callum to move away from the eternal so we could join Zane and Tink. Be with the ones who loved us instead of in the presence of the hate that oozed out from the eternal like a deadly cloud of gas.

Tink had picked up Zane and was heading toward the smaller cavern. "Come. Jacob. Callum. You will need rest and food. Tink and his beautiful Zane are going to share their love."

I could see that Zane was back with us. His eyes focused on Tink, a smile on his lips. He was caressing Tink's cheek. Tink purred. "You're my kitty cat and my saviour and Zane loves Tink with all his heart," Zane said with so much emotion it was tangible, his words a delicious rasp. Both of them were erect, too.

I smiled. "I think we should just get some food, Callum. I believe Tink and Zane can handle this situation without us. He's going to be all right."

"And after we've stuffed our faces I think there's that promise you need to keep."

"What promise is that?"

"That you'd kiss me better. Remember?"

"Where do you still hurt?" I asked, groping Callum's cute bubble butt, feeling his warmth as I pulled him in close.

"Everywhere."

"Somehow I knew you'd say that."

We followed Tink and Zane into the rest chamber. They headed straight for the sleeping nook, moans and purrs filled the air as soon as Tink placed Zane onto the blankets. Their bodies were soon a tangle of limbs. A wonderful sight.

Watching Zane and Tink take turns making love to each other stirred my own cravings for Callum and I scoffed down my food as fast as I could. Soon we joined Tink and Zane in the nook. But this time we didn't become a foursome. This time I needed my man. Just me and him.

"Now fuck me as hard as you can, baby," I whispered into his ear as I opened my legs and locked them together behind his back, begging for him to take me. He didn't need any more encouragement than that, taking dirty always got him aroused.

The ceiling above reflected the starlight. I stared at it, watching as subtle colours refracted through the living crystal. I was resting my head on Callum's stomach, feeling the gentle movement and enjoying the sound of him breathing. He was sound asleep.

Zane and Tink had finished eating and were sitting together next to me. "I've come to a decision," I said.

"What's that, Jakey?" Zane asked.

"I'm going to feed the eternal twice, if the need

arises."

"Not an easy task. Tink knows that the eternal will not treat you well. Look what it did to my beautiful Zane."

"That's exactly the reason why I am the one who has to do it."

"You sure, Jakey? I mean, shouldn't we vote on it or somethin'?"

I sat up. Callum stirred. "What's going on?" he questioned, sleep still with him, his words slurred.

"I'm just telling them that I'm the one who will have to feed the eternal twice...unless the ship gets here sooner, of course."

Now Callum sat up. "But you can't, Jacob. I won't let you."

"Then who will? We've got to keep Mr. Barnaby alive long enough so he'll have a fighting chance when we extract the eternal. I know Zane can't do it again. It'll probably kill him. There's only me left."

"That's where you're wrong. I can do it," he said.

I came to embrace him. "I won't let anything hurt you, baby. Not ever."

"And what am I supposed to do if you're hurt? I'd die if you were lost to me, Jacob. I'd simply die," his words were filled with sorrow and fear, many times he had to pause just to finish his thoughts.

Tink coughed politely into his hand. "It may not come to that. The ship may get here by tomorrow night."

"And it may not," I said.

"If there are no interruptions to its flight plan, all may be well. Don't fret, Jacob. Just take this one step at a time. Prepare yourself for the feeding tomorrow afternoon by getting some rest now. We will all worry about the consequences of any other action when the time arises. Stick to the plan."

"Tinkles is right, Jakey. We've got to get some rest. Worry about other shit when it happens. Who knows, we could be off this rock sooner that you think."

Before I could add any more to the conversation, Callum pulled me back down so he could wrap me in his love. My body overwhelmed with his intention before I could resister any protest. Not that I wanted to. Callum was my world. If he wanted to comfort me, who was I to argue? Soon my thoughts eased and eyelids became heavy.

Sleep overcame me.

Chapter Fifteen

My turn to feed the eternal came around a lot quicker than I would have liked. Not for the fact that I had to do such a thing, even though that scared the spit out of me, but because the one I was feeding was in the guise of my dear friend Mr. Barnaby.

“Here comes the main course,” the eternal said with a joy only it understood as all four of us went to it.

I ignored it, but shuddered at the thought of having to keep the thing inside my friend alive. But what choice did I have? If the eternal died while inside the host then that was it for both of them. I hated fucked up choices.

“I know you said you didn’t want to, but can you make sure my foreskin stays retracted, baby?”

Callum offered a reassuring smile. “Sure, anything for you. Just don’t kick me in the balls, okay?”

Zane asked, “What? Did I hurt you, Cals?”

“It’s all right, Zane. Jacob kissed me better,”

Callum replied with a cheekiness I thought only Zane could achieve.

"We must be ready for anything. The eternal will do whatever it takes to take Jacob from us. We must be vigilant," Tink said, sounding more like a coach before a big game with his pep talk.

Callum grabbed my cock. The second he touched me, I stirred. Zane went behind me, holding my hands tight behind my back. I swallowed hard. This was it. I was about to feed a monster.

"Ready, Jakey?"

Callum had been successful in getting me erect, jerking me off and using that wonderful tongue of his to achieve that goal. Then again, I never doubted him for a second. Pre-cum dribbled from my piss slip like a spider's silk saturated by morning dew. My stomach turned.

I was ready for the transfer.

"I'm ready." I nodded.

Zane pushed me down onto my knees with a gentle but fluid movement. My vision consumed by one thing and one thing only. The sight of Mr. Barnaby's cock as erect and ready as mine.

I shuffled closer.

"We're here for you, Jacob," Callum said.

Tink held up Mr. Barnaby's cock while Callum pulled down on mine, his hand pulling at the root of me to keep me retracted. He didn't hurt.

Thankfully, my foreskin wasn't tight so I retracted easily. I also wasn't as loose as Zane, so once I was retracted the rim of my head kept the skin where it should be for the procedure.

A heart beat later, our sensitive skin touched and a jolt of electricity shot through me. One I remembered so well. My mind spun, and for one terrifying moment I was shrouded in darkness.

When light returned to my vision, I was lying next to Callum on a bed inside a tent made of animal hides. I blinked, making sure what I was seeing was real.

The tent's flap burst open, a large naked man, eyes as wild as fire, knelt down once inside, "My Liege, we are under attack."

I didn't know what to say. My disorientation still clouded my reason. "What?" was all I could manage in a feeble voice.

Callum sat up. "What's going on?"

"I don't know," was my reply in all honesty.

The man stood up. He was all rippling muscles and a cock that could gag even the most enthusiastic. I didn't recognise him, even though I suspected I had been transported by the eternal to the dragon realm. I knew this was a point in the path of my life, that's how the monster fed, how it drew out the energy it required from its victim. I also knew that this reality was only a possibility, just like what Zane had been shown. But when

was I? Callum looked the same, age wise. I assumed I wasn't in the far future.

Actually, more important than when, was why. Why had I been shown this point in a possible life? Did the eternal I feed also live off fear? I shook my head. No, this eternal didn't need to manipulate time to sustain its food. It had plenty to choose from, Zane and Callum and Tink also at its disposal. So what was it doing?

"My Liege, your urgent attention is required. You must act by ordering the counter strike."

I got up. Callum came so he was next to me. "Lead the way," I said, mustering up my most commanding voice.

The messenger led us outside. We were in a camp clearing. A short distance from where I stood was the familiar jungle of the dragon realm, thick with foliage. Above was the purple sky I had grown to love. A sky filled with dragons. Thousands of them.

Nottolu greeted me in the traditional dragon way by grabbing my cock and clamping my foreskin, letting go quick. I offered him a nod. "What news, my warrior?"

His dark eyes were deep with sorrow. "Hundreds upon hundreds of dragons from the clan of the Dark have descended upon us. We are outnumbered."

Callum grabbed my hand. "Why are they

attacking us now? Didn't you sign the treaty with them?"

"They have been taken by an eternal invasion into our realm. They no longer respect any law, clan or otherwise. All they want to do is conquer and destroy."

"Holy fuck," Callum said with a gasp. "What hope is there if eternal have taken over the dragon realm? Everything will be lost. We've failed, Jacob."

Then it struck me. I knew what the eternal was doing. It was draining away my hope. It all made sense now. No wonder Zane took so long to come back from its influence. He had believed there was no hope for us. He believed he had murdered us, his life then without the hope of ever being loved again.

Now, with the sound of trees crashing all around me and the sky swarming with the enemy, I couldn't help but become overwhelmed by that fact that hope had been lost here, too. My spirit sank.

Nottolu screamed his war cry and charged into the hoard of the enemy that closed in around us. He was killed in an instant—slashed to death by angry claws and teeth, his body a bloody mess to stain the ground. The enemy dragons halted their advance. No longer did they need to charge. They had won. All that remained was to kill the King—

kill me – and they'd be victorious.

Callum stepped forward, shielding me. "I do this for my King."

"No, Callum," I screamed at the top of my lungs, unable to grab him and pull him back in time. He, too, charged into the waiting enemy. I was struck with horror as he was plucked up in mid-run by one of the largest dragons and held high. Screams of agony were all that came from him as he was crushed by the dragon's grip. Blood trickled to stain the creature's scales. I felt sick and collapsed onto the ground, unable to breathe.

"I have killed your bitch," the dragon said, a voice as cold and calculated as the eternal I fed inside Mr. Barnaby. Callum was as limp as a rag doll now. He was dead. His silence all the proof I needed. "Now it's your turn."

The dragon threw him at my feet. I gasped with so much sorrow, I could think of nothing else I could do but fall upon his broken body. I wept over him with everything I had. I was nothing without Callum. He was my life. My love.

My hope had been destroyed, just as the eternal had desired. I looked up. Through my misty vision a shadow came over me. The dragon, dark as night, reached down and plucked me up, taking me away from my Callum. I didn't even get the chance to grieve over his passing before I would meet my end. An end that could happen if I let the

eternal take more from me than it already had.

"Let me go!"

The dragon's grip was harsh. I could feel my bones snap and the blood that coursed fast through my veins leak out from the many lacerations I endured to stain my skin. Was this the end? No more hope left?

"Let me go!" I repeated.

I was no longer surrounded by an enemy that had destroyed the jungle just as easy as it has destroyed the clan I ruled. I was no longer in the dragon's hold. Where was I? I blinked. My vision came to me slow and sure. What I saw gave me relief. I was surrounded by crystals. Beautiful crystals. I was back in the cavern.

"Jakey's back with us," Zane's voice cried out. I couldn't see him. But I knew I was being comforted. I knew that I was being touched by those I loved. I could feel their warmth all over me.

"I love you so much, Jacob, and I'll never let you go," Callum said, my eyes focusing on him as he came to kiss me.

My lips were warmed by his touch. We kissed. When he parted, I could see. "I think I just visited hell," I said, my voice harsh and distant.

"Tink thinks you did very well, Jacob. You fed the eternal and now Lionel is safe for another day," Tink ran his clawed hand all over my chest,

concentrating on my nipples. "Hopefully the ship will be here tonight."

I couldn't agree more. But for the here and now I had something else on my mind. I was aroused. Someone was at my cock. I craned my neck to confirm who was blowing me so well, leaving my foreskin unretracted so that it got stimulated as well. What I saw made me smile. There was Zane looking back at me while his mouth was filled with my erection. He was massaging my balls, too. Fuck he was good. No wonder Tink said that showing love would help bring back the one who had fed the eternal. It sure worked on me.

"I'm going to make love to you," Callum said, his words like medicine for my soul. A soul that had been damaged by the eternal's poison.

A short moment later, and after a shuffle around so everyone was in the best position possible, Callum parted my legs. Zane was still sucking my cock. I was close to climax. Heck, I was so close I didn't think I'd last another second.

I was right. As soon as Callum pierced me, I blew. The sensation of him inside me was mind blowing. He knew how to please me, stimulating my prostate as he gained his rhythm. I had missed him so much, even though I had experienced him last night. Heck, I could have him over and over and forever, too. I was just so thankful he wasn't dead as the eternal had shown me.

Zane groaned as he took all I gave. I'm sure I filled his mouth. My cum dribbled from the corner of his lips as he came off me, my cock wet with his attention. He kissed Tink, sharing my fluids with the cat being. I had an urge to take Tink's cock into my mouth. "Come here, Tink. Let me suck you off. I haven't tasted you yet."

Tink purred. "Tink would like that."

Callum grabbed my cock, even though I was now softening. He always liked to hold onto something when he made love to me. I smiled. Fuck he was handsome. The sight of him, all toned and taught muscles working toward one goal, his gaze fixed on me as he concentrated, all gave me so much pleasure. I had chills down my spine. I was the luckiest guy alive. And yep, the eternal had failed with me, too. I still had hope raging within me. I still had those I loved around me.

Zane had come around so that his cock was near my mouth, too. I smiled, eager to now take them both, Zane and Tink, at the same time. I opened my mouth and Zane and Tink fed me their cocks. Their taste combined was fantastic, Zane's familiarity, that sweet tang, and something I didn't recognise, like lemon and cinnamon, obviously Tink's. I reached up and grabbed their cocks, one for each hand, jerking them both off while I sucked. I wanted more. I wanted to taste them on the most intimate level. I pulled at the

root of their cocks, making their foreskins retract, my tongue working overtime.

Again my mouth was awash with a tang and salt I so loved. Tink continued to purr. Zane was kissing him, holding him tight as I sucked and licked and groaned. I was in heaven.

Then everything happened at once.

Callum gripped my hips, digging his nails into my skin. He pushed himself into me as deep as he could go. His stomach quivered in that delicious way and his face screwed up, wrinkling his nose. The look and his actions were unmistakable. He had blown his load and was awash with the rush of orgasm. But I didn't have time to admire him. Warmth filled my mouth, one that numbed my tongue and slid down to tickle my throat. Tink and Zane had broken their passionate kiss, both looking down at me as their bodies also shuddered with the delight of climax.

I swallowed all they gave me and I took all of Callum's love, too. I was complete. I was loved. And nothing, not even the evil of an eternal and his malicious plans could take that away from me.

"I love you all," I said, reiterating my thoughts when Zane and Tink pulled their cocks out of my mouth, dripping with the reward of my efforts.

They all came to embrace me.

Chapter Sixteen

Night fell, the crystals reflecting the starlight with perfection. It was now the night of the third day. No sign of the ship. Tink had said that if the ship could get into orbit, then we would be able to be matter transported. If it couldn't, then the pods would be the only way to get up above the atmosphere. I was hoping for the first scenario. I didn't fancy another dash through eternal central, the shards cutting my feet. I'd only just healed from the first time.

We were all in the smaller chamber, sharing a meal and the warmth of our love for each other.

Tink stood up. "I will go check the homing beacon. It can tell me if the ship is close."

"Does Tinkles want Zane to join him or will he be able to survive without me for a moment?" Zane let out a chuckle, puckering his lips in a kissy-kissy motion.

"Tink will survive."

They kissed. Once parted, Zane got that cheeky grin I knew all too well. "Just get that fuckin' cute

arse of your back here as soon as you can. Zane has a hankerin' for your man pussy."

Callum laughed.

"You're such a tease, Zane," I said, laughing, too.

"Yeah, that I am." And he slapped Tink on his backside as the cat being turned to leave.

"My beautiful Zane will be in so much trouble when Tink gets back."

Zane rubbed his hands together. "Can't wait. I'll just get Jakey and Cals to keep me warm while you're gone, hey?"

Tink didn't answer. He had now disappeared into the main chamber.

"Say, Jacob, you never told me about your experience when you were feeding the eternal," Callum said, a dramatic change in tone and content of the conversation. Why would he bring up such a thing now?

"What's to tell? I was taken to a time and place I never want to see come true, that's all."

He came to kiss me on my cheek. "So who had you?"

"What do you mean?" Now I *was* curious.

"You kept screaming, *let me go*. I just wanted to know who had you, that's all."

"Yeah, it was some real freaky shit," Zane interjected. "Took us all ages to get you back to us."

I turned to Zane. "It did?"

"Hey, don't dodge the question," Callum said, but not in a malicious way. He was genuine with his concern. His hand across my back was enough to let me know that.

"Or you'll do what?" I said, emulating Zane's cheekiness of a moment ago.

He came over me, pushing me to the ground, tickling me as he tumbled on top of me. I was in fits of laughter, as was he. Together we rolled around, a mess of limbs, laughing and tickling and getting in quick kisses and gropes of each other's arse all at the same time.

"Or I'll tickle you till you beg me to stop," Callum said.

"That's no incentive," I added, even more cheeky than before.

Callum pinned me. He held my hands above my head and placed his full weight on my chest. I couldn't move other than to thrash my legs in a futile attempt to buck him off me. He shuffled up so he could rest his cock on my chin. I poked out my tongue so I could lick his foreskin.

He laughed some more. "Then I'm afraid it's no more mister happy until you tell me," he said, shifting his weight back a little so his cock fell from my reach.

I put on my best puppy dog face, as forlorn as possible. "No fair."

"Then tell me."

"Hey, save some of that action for me, too," Zane said.

I was about to add something really witty, like how I would get as much cock as I needed without Callum's help, when Tink dashed back into the rest chamber.

"Come quick. My beautiful Zane. Callum. Jacob. Come quick." Tink's eyes were wide with fear, his tail swished from side to side.

Zane sprung to attention, rushing to Tink. "What's the matter, Tinkles? You look like you've seen a ghost or somethin'."

"Lionel is gone!"

Callum jumped off me.

We charged together into the main chamber. Where we had bound Mr. Barnaby, shredded ropes lay. How the fuck did the old man get out of that? Did it come out of Mr. Barnaby to untie him, then when freed, re-joined with the old man? How horrific for him. Then again, as I thought about it, such a notion didn't seem so crazy. The thing did say that the ropes wouldn't bind him for long. But what would be the purpose of escaping now? We were the only food source on the planet. Every other eternal here was in shadow form.

In that moment, I felt for Mr. Barnaby, even more so than when I had to feed the eternal within him. While the old man was with us, we could at

least make sure he stayed alive long enough for us to take him to the ship and extract the eternal. Perhaps that was it. The eternal had decided that it couldn't win. It escaped to make sure Mr. Barnaby would perish and it could then live another day to take over another host when another opportunity presented itself.

"What do we do now?" Callum asked.

"Tink is unsure." The cat being's brow creased when it glanced at the homing beacon. "Ship is close but I fear time may be short for Lionel. The eternal will need to be fed soon. Now that he's not here we can't help him. Not until the ship comes."

"I think that's why the eternal escaped," I said, verbalising my thoughts. "It knows we won't follow it into the crystal metropolis. I mean, it can just leave Mr. Barnaby when he's close to death? Can't it?"

Tink scratched his furry chin. "Tink doesn't know for sure. Many things about eternal's that are still a mystery. Tink didn't even know that an eternal could leave the host body."

"I'd say that's how the fucker escaped," Zane said. "It came out of Mister B long enough to untie the ropes. I so hate it. But the fucker's a cunnin' bastard, I'll give it that."

Tink embraced Zane. "But Tink has a curl in his tail."

"A what?" I glanced at Tink's tail. It looked

straight to me. In fact, for the first time in a while the tail was unmoving, reflecting no sign of frustration or anger.

The cat being purred, and replied, "A plan that the eternal may not have considered."

"Oh, you mean an ace up your sleeve, hey?" Zane balanced on his tip-toes so he could plant a kiss on Tink's cheek. Tink leaned down to accept his gesture.

"Well, do tell," Callum said. "Don't keep us in suspense."

"Tink's ship has a matter transporter that can pin-point a life form from orbit. If Lionel is alive, Tink can transport him aboard."

"That's awesome!" Zane said.

"But that's only if Mr. Barnaby's alive, though." I came to embrace Callum. He was already holding my hand, but I wanted to feel his warmth. A cold chill ran through my body. Yep, Tink's plan was a good one. But it all relied on one thing. Mr. Barnaby had to last long enough without us feeding the monster inside him. Damn it. "I should have given the eternal more of myself. I was the last one to feed it. I'm responsible in a way for Mr. Barnaby's wellbeing."

Zane and Tink came to hold me. "Hey, don't talk like that, Jakey. We all gave the eternal the same. That was the deal."

"You were the one who volunteered to feed it

twice, remember." Callum ran his hand across the small of my back. Geez, he knew how to soothe me. "You're the most unselfish person I know. So don't talk like that, okay?"

They were right. But still. I couldn't help but feel guilty. This wasn't how it was supposed to turn out at all. We were supposed to feed the eternal until the ship arrived then extract the thing and head on home.

"Thank, guys," was my genuine reply. I was glad I was here with them. They completed me, more than they would have ever thought, too.

For a long moment we all held each other. The reflected starlight and the gentle flash of the homing beacon made me realise just how beautiful this place was. Pity it was fraught with danger and that I wouldn't like to be stuck here.

Eventually, Zane asked, "So what we gonna do now?"

"We wait, my beautiful Zane," Tink replied. "Although Tink suggests we takes turns to watch until ship arrives. Tink doesn't want the eternal to come back into the cavern to destroy the disruptor or homing beacon."

I hadn't thought of that, and Tink's words once more sent those shivers through me. Maybe that was the eternal's plan. Maybe it would return to destroy Tink's machine. It would be protected by the disruptor by being inside Mr. Barnaby and,

really, it wouldn't take much for it to watch the cavern and wait for the perfect time to attack. I swallowed hard.

"I'll take first watch," Zane said. "I'm awake and I can stay up for a little while longer before I need to crash."

Seconds later, we had established our watch roster. I was after Zane, then Tink and Callum. We'd watch in four hour shifts and rotate as many times as needed before the ship arrived. My guess would be that we would need to do two shifts each, the ship roughly arriving in twenty-four hours.

I just hoped with all my heart that Mr. Barnaby stayed alive that long. The eternal was due to be fed in the afternoon, the ship would arrive many hours after that. How long could an eternal keep a host alive without sustenance? From what I remembered with my time feeding Thomas, there wasn't much of a gap. When the eternal wanted food, it would do anything to get it. Maybe that was the small spark of hope we had. The eternal, in its desperation, would make a mistake in judgement.

How we were going to secure Mr. Barnaby again, was anyone's guess. But for the here and now, all we had was that small hope.

Zane touched me on my cheek, brushing his

fingers across my skin. Tender and caring. "Your turn, Jakey," he whispered. He pressed his warm lips onto mine, then added when he parted, "Just don't be shocked by what you see."

"I don't think anything's going to surprise me anymore about this place."

Zane kissed me again, before he crawled over to Tink. The cat being stirred. Soon he was in Tink's arms, secure and safe, a gentle purr filled the sleeping nook.

I got up. Reluctant to leave, I missed Callum's warmth next to me straight away. Still, I had a job to do, and this time I wasn't going to stuff it up like I did when I fed the eternal.

I came into the main chamber. It was still bathed in the eerie glow of crystal filtered starlight. I guessed it was early in the morning, about one or two. Zane was right. What I saw did cause me surprise. Concern, too.

Lined up at the entrance of the cavern, standing like creepy as all fuck sentinels, their stare intense, were hundreds upon hundreds of shadow form eternals. So many I couldn't help but be struck by fear. Sure, I knew that they couldn't enter the cavern, but that also meant that we couldn't leave it. No way could we fight our way through that many of them, no matter how eager.

I swallowed hard as I sat down, crossed-legged, in front of the disruptor. As I stared at the eternals

with as much intensity as they gave me, I realised that we only had one option when it came to getting out of here. The ship would have to come into orbit, beaming us up or whatever it was called. Having to make a mad dash through the crystal forest and eternal metropolis wouldn't be an option.

A familiar voice then pierced my dark thought. *Help me, Jacob. I'm lost and I need you to find me. Help me, my dear friend. Help me.*

"Mr. Barnaby," I said with a gasp, my voice filled with both fear and concern and helplessness.

How was I going to help him?

Chapter Seventeen

C*ome and help me, dear fellow. I need you. I need you. Help me.*

I stood, coming as close to the cavern entrance as I dared. I could see where the disruption field had reached its limit. The eternals had formed a cordon about a metre from the mouth of the cavern.

“How can I help you?” My stomach turned. Being this close to so many eternals scared the spit out of me. Heck, being close to one was a nightmare. This was hell in shadow form, no question.

Then something unbelievable happened. The eternals parted, creating a path through which I could walk. I stared for the longest time at the gap in the sea of shadows that had been created for my benefit. If one thing was certain, there was no way I was leaving the protective shield, not for anything. Sure, Mr. Barnaby needed me, but sacrificing myself in the belief that the opportunity which presented itself was genuine, was a risk too

great to take. I wouldn't be any good to him with an eternal inside me.

They won't hurt you. They know that they also need a food source. What good is taking a host if they can't feed? The eternal within me knows this now. Help me. Help me. You will not be taken. You cannot be fed upon. Please, Jacob. Trust me. Come and help me.

"This has to be a trick." I took a step back. "Why would an eternal care about whether the host dies or not? It'll just return to shadow form and be done with it."

Why is it I can talk to you now, my dear boy? The eternal within me understands when it has been defeated. Help me. Come, Jacob. Help me.

"I don't believe you," I spat, furious that the eternal would even think that I could be so easily manipulated. Yep, the voice sounded like Mr. Barnaby, but I also knew that the old man wouldn't jeopardise my safety, not by asking me to step out of the protective shield straight into a hoard of eternals thirsty to take a host, anyway. I wouldn't ask him to, no matter how desperate.

Then you will die. You and your friends, too.

In that moment, the eternals outside came back into position, closing the path. I couldn't help but let out a sigh of relief. Thank fuck I hadn't fallen for the eternal's trick. One thing I knew by what had just transpired, Mr. Barnaby was still alive. I knew the thing wasn't due to be fed until this afternoon, but even so. Knowing such a thing kept

the small spark of hope within me alive.

"Hold on, Mr. Barnaby," I whispered, sitting back down near the disruptor.

The rest of my watch was uneventful. Other than the fact the eternal's stared at me with such intensity that I couldn't help but shiver thinking of what could have been if I had ventured outside. If I hadn't encountered an eternal before, the trap might have worked. I'd be food. No help from the others to bring me back from the eternal's influence.

The sound of footsteps knocked me from my reverie.

Tink approached. And now I knew that padding and scraping sound belonged to the cat being, I couldn't help but be heartened by them. Still seated, I turned to look upon him.

"Is it time for the end of my watch already?"

"Not yet, my friend, Jacob. Tink couldn't sleep." The cat being's eyes were fixed on the sight of all those eternal's, watching and waiting. "The disturbing song of the eternal's was haunting my dreams."

"Yeah, I know exactly what you mean."

"You've been hearing them, too?"

"Sure have."

"Tink is sure glad you didn't listen to them."

"Jacob is, as well." I couldn't help but smile. Referring to myself in the third person, like how

Tink talked, was catching. No wonder Zane spoke like that now, too.

When Tink rested his clawed hand upon my shoulder, a chime sounded from the disruptor.

"Ship is here," Tink stated matter-of-factly.

I jumped up, considerably more excited about the news than the cat being was. "Already? Seems like it didn't come across any trouble then, right?"

Tink rubbed his furry chin. "Tink doesn't like this. Before we couldn't get into orbit because of eternal spaceships. Now ship can. Why would that be?"

I couldn't answer, only able to think of another question. "So where have their ships gone, then?"

"Exactly. Eternals don't give up. Look at them all out there. They're up to something."

I couldn't help but agree with him. Having all the eternals present outside at this particular time, didn't bode well. That and the fact the ship could come into orbit without bother, seemed to add a curious element to the whole situation. Although, knowing the eternals, whatever they were up to, it wouldn't be good...for us.

"Well, at least we don't have to run through the eternal metropolis in a futile attempt to get to the pods."

Tink smiled, revealing his pointed teeth. "You are right about that, Jacob my friend." Tink leaned over the machine, pressing panels and twisting

what I could only imagine were dials of some sort. "Please wake the others. We have an eternal to extract. The sooner the better as far as Tink is concerned."

I went to the sleeping nook, leaving Tink to fiddle with the disruptor and work out whatever it was he needed to work out.

Callum was stirring. I couldn't help but smile as I watched him. Whatever he was dreaming about was clear, he had a full on boner. I so wanted to give him a hand with his morning glory, but knew such a thing would have to wait. We were leaving the crystal cavern. I couldn't wait.

"Hey, baby," I whispered into his ear, running my lips across his skin.

"Is it my shift already?" he asked, with a yawn.

"Nope. We're getting out of here. The ship's arrived."

"Thank fuck," Callum said, coming into my arms and hugging me tight.

"What's goin' on?" Zane asked, rubbing his head, trying to shake off the effects of his sleep. I had to admit, lately he had been sleeping as content as I had ever seen him. I would imagine Tink would have had a lot to do with that.

Before I could repeat the news to Zane, Tink entered the smaller chamber. But instead of looking concerned as he had previously, a smile was planted on his lips. He said, "Tink is ready to

transport you all to the ship. Zane my beautiful, when we get there I will need your help to set up the scan. The ship will need clean human DNA to help it extract the eternal from Lionel."

"Sure thing, Tinkles." Zane went to his lover. "But when we've finished gettin' that fucker out of Mister B, you owe me a good all over lickin' clean with that sexy rough tongue of yours."

Tink purred. "So long as my beautiful Zane doesn't give Tink hair balls, then Tink will be happy to clean him."

"Zane's cock doesn't have hair. You can start there, Tinkles."

"Tink would like that."

Both of them laughed. The other thing I loved about new love was the way everything became erotic and private jokes were something wonderful that spurred on more action in the bedroom. Then again, Zane didn't need much encouragement, especially since he was already naked.

I grabbed Callum. "I think I speak for all of us when I say, let's get the fuck out of here, Tink," I said.

"Yeah," Callum said. "The farther from this place I am the better."

"Then we are ready," Tink said, adding to his voice a noise that reminded me of a cat baying for its supper.

A feeling of wanting to throw my guts up overtook me. My vision blurred until I could see nothing but darkness and I had lost all sensation other than disorientation. I'd forgotten how terrifying matter transportation was.

When I had gained back my sight and my body no longer felt like it was a separate part of my being, I recognised the organic walls and eerie blue light of Tink's spaceship.

I never thought in my entire life that I'd be happy to see ugly varicose veined walls and furniture that looked like piles of dog shit. But I was. I embraced Callum. He was now semi-erect, the remnants of his dreams still drawing from his hormones.

"Zane's right, you know," I whispered to him.

"About what?"

"That when this is all finished, I'm so going to fuck you red raw and then do you again until you beg me to stop," I replied, emulating just what he'd say to me to get me all horny.

My words must have worked. He was hard again. The sight of his piss slit so tantalizing as his foreskin retracted of its own accord. With a beautiful smile and a sparkle in those perfect blue eyes of his, he said, "Why wait?"

Tink cleared his throat. "Tink thinks that there will be plenty of time for loving one another once our mission is complete. Yes, the ship got here

early. But there is plenty to do as Tink configures the transporter to pick up Lionel without hurting him."

"What'cha mean, Tinkles?"

"Transporter will need a clean pattern. To be safe, Tink will programme in as many clean patterns as possible. That way, when Lionel is transported aboard the ship, the extractor will be able to sterilize what is essentially an invasive germ inside him. Without that, the eternal would be transported with him and we'd have the bigger problem of that thing being aboard."

"And there's no way we want that," Callum said, his erection easing once more. I smiled. The thought of an eternal sure was a mood killer. Then again, getting Callum back in the mood wouldn't take much effort. I couldn't wait. I needed to be with him away from an eternal's stare. Away from their home world and the living crystals that had surrounded us. In that moment, I yearned for the big, comfortable bed in our home behind the Food Emporium.

I understood. I said, "So I take it we all need to be analysed in some sort of scanner, before you can grab Mr. Barnaby?"

"Exactly," Tink purred. "Jacob. Callum. My beautiful Zane. All of you will now help Tink." The cat being went to the bank of panels that were set out before him on the bridge of the second

ship.

"Sure. Anything for you, Tink," I said. "Just tell me where you want me."

"Yep. We're here for you, mate," Callum added.

A light ignited in an alcove off to the right of the panels, the place where we had been transported from the planet below. I took it that we were all to step inside the beam and be scanned.

"Step inside the light," Tink commanded, confirming my suspicions. "Scan won't take long."

Zane and Callum took my hands and together we walked into the alcove, surrounded by a light that tickled my skin.

Zane said, "Hey, this —"

A klaxon sounded and Tink screamed something incomprehensible. All of a sudden the cat being was a flurry of activity, pressing buttons and dashing around the bridge like a man possessed.

The view screen shimmered into existence. I could see why the alarm had been sounded. The ship was surrounded by eternal vessels. In the view I caught from the alcove bathed in light, I couldn't count the number displayed.

The scan finished and the light extinguished. All three of us burst out of the scanning area, rushing to Tink's aid.

"What you want us to do, Tinkles?" Zane asked. He didn't need to question what was going on. None of us did. The ominous view before us was plain for all to see. The ship was surrounded by eternal and I couldn't help but get the feeling that this was their intention all along.

We had fallen into a trap.

Tink was right. The ship passing through eternal space so easily was odd. No wonder. They were waiting, just like they were back at the cavern. Watching and waiting. Something eternal did with perfection.

A different sound pierced the bridge.

"What was that?" Callum asked with a squeak.

"The eternal are trying to make contact," Tink replied. "They want to talk to us."

Now that was weird. Why would the eternal want to talk? Why didn't they just attack or board us or whatever it was they had in mind. We were their food, ready for the talking as far as I was concerned.

Tink pressed a couple more panels. But instead of the screen being filled with the sight of an eternal with its onyx eyes and deep shadowy form sending chills through me, something strange confronted us.

An alien, reptilian and with frog-like eyes and blue scales, said with a cold, harsh voice, "Surrender."

Chapter Eighteen

“Banshan folk!” Tink said with a gasp. It didn’t take a genius to work out that the alien Tink had named as the Banshan had been taken as a host. The eyes, even though strange to me, also reflected that familiar darkness. The deep sorrow that expressed both helplessness and a chilling power only a host could have. Mr. Barnaby had it. Thomas had it.

“And if we don’t surrender, fucker. What then?” Zane blurted.

The Banshan blinked, slow and deliberate. “We will take you willingly or not.” The screen went blank. I took it from that the alien no longer wanted to talk.

A heart beat later, a vibration shook the foundations of the organic structures of the bridge. Ending as quick as it began. I held onto Callum while Tink pressed a few more panels, bringing up different views from outside his vessel. What I saw on one of the views Tink presented sent a wave of shock through me. I understood why

Callum pissed himself when he was scared out of his mind. Tink's ship, all silver and sleek from what I could see, had a Banshan ship attached to it. A dark scar across what I believed to be its aft bow.

Another vibration rocked us.

"The integrity of the hull has been compromised," Tink said, his tail swishing and his ears pressed to his head. "Quick. My beautiful Zane. Jacob. Callum. I need you to get into the transporter. The eternal's are protected from the ship's disruptor by their Banshan hosts. Tink must get you back into the cavern for your own safety."

"Like fuck, you are," Zane said. "I'm not leaving without you, Tinkles."

Tink's brow creased and his eyes widened. "The ship is reading ten Banshan life forms aboard already. I cannot defend you against such numbers. Banshan are tough, just like the spirit folk. Don't fear, my beautiful Zane. Tink can phase shift."

Zane was visibly upset, more so that I had ever seen him. His cheeks flushed red and his eyes deep and intense. "I don't care. I'm not goin' anywhere without you. Period. 'Sides, you can still be taken as food, hey?"

"Oh, my beautiful Zane, you are so brave." Tink embraced Zane, kissing him on his forehead. "But if anything happens to you, Tink would be

devastated. You must go with your good friends back to the cavern. Tink will come for you. He promises.”

I was torn between emotions. On the one hand Tink was right, every fibre in my being wanted me to be safe from the eternal. For the here and now, the only way we could assure that would be to get back to the cavern. On the other hand, my conscience leaned toward the fact that Zane was right. If we were going to do anything, including being taken as either food or hosts, we would do it together. Besides, once we were back at the cavern, what then? What if Tink didn't come back for us? How long could we stay inside without the eternal getting to us? All it would take would be one of those Banshan aliens walking right on through the disruptor field and we'd be taken. How could we defend ourselves then?

My conscience won. I said, “We're not leaving without you either, Tink. Going back to the cavern is a band aid solution at best. We'd be just as fucked. Eventually, they'd get to us down there, too. As you said many times, they don't give up.”

Callum nodded. “Ah fuck, I'd never thought I'd say this either, but we're damned if we do and we're damned if we don't. But if you ask me, I'd rather be up here fighting for our lives with all you guys than sitting and waiting for the inevitable down there.”

Tink sighed. His golden and blue eyes reflected the warmth of his soul, but when he unretracted his claws that warmth became filled with what could only be described as lust. The same look of lust Zane got when he wanted to conquer me in the bedroom or rip the heads off insectmans. "Then we must arm ourselves."

"Now you're talkin', Tinkles." Zane smiled. And yep, that look filled his expression, too.

"So where are the weapons then?" I asked. By weapons, I hoped there were guns that could blow away anything in their path with awesome technology like disintegrating lasers or some sort of phase shift weapon that could make the intruders disappear in the blink of an eye.

"In the weapons pantry over there." The cat being gestured to the right wall of the bridge next to the transporter nook. Zane, Callum and I rushed over to the spot. I was eager to get on with defending not only myself, but those I loved, too.

At first I couldn't see the pantry. There were no distinguishable features on the wall other than the familiar organic texture that covered the rest of the ship, veins and all. Then, upon closer inspection I noticed a seam.

"How do I open it?" I asked.

"Run your hand across the join. Tink has programmed his friends and his beautiful Zane's DNA into the ship's memory. You all have

complete access.”

When I touched the groove, a section of the wall parted and slid open. Inside there was a feast for the eyes, but I didn’t recognise anything. I mean, nothing looked like a gun, one I could hold and fire upon our enemies anyway.

“What the fuck’s all this, Tinkles?” Zane asked, verbalising my thoughts with perfection.

“Organic modifiers,” was his short, sharp reply.

I knew why Tink gave such a terse response. While we were worried about saving our arses, another Banshan vessel had sealed itself onto his ship. The screen lit up again and once more the reptilian face of our enemy appeared to fill the bridge.

“Organic what?” Callum questioned, holding up a squid-like thing in his hands, turning it curiously. I didn’t need to ask him what he was thinking. The look on his face, complete with that cute nose of his being screwed up, told me all I needed to know. He had no idea what the weapons were either.

But Tink couldn’t answer. He was busy pressing panels. I didn’t know what he was doing, but I’m sure it was important.

The Banshan startled prattling on about being conquered and that we’d soon be in their hands and blah, blah, blah. I was more interested in the stuff inside the weapons pantry and what the hell

they did. I had picked out a spider-web looking thing. Zane grabbed something that looked like a blue cucumber.

Callum let out a gasp as the squid thing he held latched onto his arm, its tentacles sucking onto his skin with a squelch. He held out the arm the thing had attached to, a puzzled expression soon overtaking his earlier surprise.

He closed his eyelids.

I went to him. "You all right, baby?"

A few seconds later, he opened his eyelids and said, "It spoke to me. My God, it's a pulse weapon controlled by my gestures." He smiled, one that revealed his eye teeth. "I'm so going to kick some alien butt."

"That's awesome. But I wonder what the hell this thing does." I held up the spider web, the blue light that pervaded everything inside Tink's ship filtered through the treads. I was about to add that what I had picked out was a dud, when the thing somehow slipped out of my fingers and attached itself to my head. I don't know why, but I had a compulsion to let the thing fall onto me. I let a yelp, but was soon silenced by a strange yet soothing voice inside my mind.

Protection is my aim. I am your shield. No energy weapon can penetrate my web. With your help and your thoughts I can extend my reach to protect those around you, too.

"Wow," I said with a gasp. "I'm wearing some sort of shield."

"That's way cool," Zane said, waving the cucumber in front of him. "But what the fuck is this thing? I mean, I wouldn't mind if it was some sort of alien dildo, but unless I'm goin' to ram it up the alien's arses to stop 'em, I don't think that's goin' to help us now is it?"

But like me, as he spoke, the weapon activated. Instead of attaching itself to his skin, as Callum's and mine had done, Zane's weapon jumped out of his grip and forced itself down his throat. Zane gagged, but like all of us, let the thing do whatever it was it was going to do. Soon he let out a muffled scream as he tried to swallow the thing. Then, like Callum had done a few seconds ago, Zane closed his eyelids once the weapon had disappeared down into his mouth. It was quite erotic watching as he took it all and his Adam's apple bobbed and throat swelled as the weapon travelled toward his stomach.

Both of us went to him, reassuring him with our touch. "Zane?" I asked, concerned that he had been hurt. He had doubled over. Swallowing a cucumber wouldn't have been easy, no matter how willing.

Eventually, Zane said, "I've got me a phase shifter. And fuck me, I can extend it to protect you guys, too."

"I can do that with mine, too," I said.

Callum added, "So it looks like I'm the attacker and you're the defender, Jacob. And Zane, you're the one who'll stop those eternal bastards from taking us as hosts." Callum looked heartened by Zane's news. In fact, if I didn't know any better, I'd say he had found a new sense of confidence. Then again, I couldn't blame him. Having a means to defend ourselves, no longer naked in that sense, was a great feeling.

Zane smiled, that cheekiness returning, "Well, good things always happen when you swallow, hey?"

"Looks like we're set then," I said, noticing that Callum's squid weapon had absorbed itself into his skin. For all intents and purposes it looked as though he wasn't armed at all. Which, in a way, was a good thing. Had my spider web sunk itself into me, as well? I reached up to feel. It had. Wow. This was awesome.

"I'm so ready." Callum said.

I would say, considering Tink had that look of absolute and sheer terror on his face, that we had discovered our new weapons abilities just in time. A noise echoed through the ship—a sound that didn't require any visual clues from the screen. The Banshan were smashing their way toward us.

"Tink is happy you are all armed."

I could see now that Tink had tried to slow the

intruders by closing bulkheads and doors. Yep, we may have super awesome weapons, but really, what good were they if we were overpowered by the sheer volume of eternal infected reptiles now coming our way? Actually, how could we defend ourselves in such a small room with too many entrances? Once the bridge doors were compromised, the Banshan would pour in and no amount of defence could combat such a thing.

We needed a plan. And quick.

"We must get to the observation deck. That is easier to defend." Tink said, his tail flicking.

He must have read my mind. But he was right. We needed to get into a better position, one where we stood a chance at surviving all this. "How do we get there?" I blurted, more as a thought than as an actual question.

"Let Tink seal the bridge controls. Then we must go through the junction tubes into the heart of the ship. Banshan hopefully won't be able to detect us. But just so you know, the observation deck is on the far side of the ship and two levels below us. The way there won't be easy. We must crawl."

"Gee, how did I know you were going to say something like that," I said, but not in a nasty way, not at all. We had to do whatever it took to give us the advantage against an enemy who wouldn't hesitate taking us for both hosts and

food. If it meant crawling through ducts on our hands and knees, then so be it.

Tink went to the opposite wall where the weapons pantry had been located. He ran his claw across a seam and in an instant a hatchway appeared, about the size of a rubbish bin lid. He wasn't wrong when he said we had to crawl. We'll be pushing ourselves along on our stomachs, army style.

When Tink had done his stuff on the bridge, pressing panels in an order only he understood, he said, "Control for the bridge is now transferred to secondary control panel. The observation deck has been sealed. But we must hurry. The Banshan are near us. They have made it to the primary hallway." Confirmation of Tink's words followed the second after he had finished speaking. The sound of a door being smashed and of cheers and many footsteps shook the bridge. Tink gestured for all of us to get into the junction tube.

"I'm first," Callum said.

"I don't care who's next, so long as I get a view of that cute arse of yours, Tinkles," Zane said, slapping Tink at the same time as he kissed him.

Tink let out a chuckle and a purr. "My beautiful Zane is going to get into so much trouble when we're out of this mess."

"I can't wait."

I crawled in after Callum.

The hatch sealed once Zane had entered the tube. Even in the low red light that engulfed me like a shroud, I could see the cat being was relieved. He wiped his brow and whispered, "They are in the bridge."

"Won't they get into the tube, too?" I asked.

"Secret rooms are DNA sealed. But yes, after some time they would be able to force the hatch open. Hopefully by then we are in the observation room and able to defend ourselves with some certainty. But we must hurry. We have a long way to go."

Callum turned, and asked, "Have you got another plan, too, Tink? I mean, I don't fancy fending off wave after wave of Banshan all day, you know." The view of his bubble butt and the tantalizing glimpse of the back of his wonderful ripe balls hanging perfect between his legs when he moved was all I could see in front of me. I was happy for such a sight. At least I had motivation.

"Tink does. He must get to the secondary control panel. From there he can try and radiate the ship with the extraction field. Something that will take time. Something that may not work. Field normally more concentrated, working in conjunction with the transport beam. Not apart from it."

"Well, we still gotta try," Zane said. "We got the technology here to kick their arses, so let's use

it."

"I agree." I patted Callum on his arse. He let out a little laugh. "Now lead the way, baby."

Chapter Nineteen

After what seemed an eternity crawling through the tube, my hands sore and my legs aching from having to push my weight along in an unnatural way, I heard something that sent a shudder through every fibre of my being.

There was someone else inside the tube with us.

I didn't need a second guess to know that the Banshan had broken the hatch and were now coming toward us. I got the distinct impression that we were being hunted. In a way, I suppose we were. We were the food, after all.

"We are not even half way there," Tink said with a soft howl. "They have got in. They have got in."

"I think we'd better hurry the fuck up," Zane said.

Tink pushed on my arse, urging me forward. I began to sweat, my heart beating loud and fast. If fighting off Banshan would have been a difficulty on the bridge, then in the tubes, I'd say it would be impossible.

Callum didn't need any encouragement to move faster. In fact, all of us were scrambling as best we could through the tubes, hoping like hell the Banshan weren't as fast as us.

Then Callum stopped. I bumped into him, my face buried in the small of his back. Normally I wouldn't have minded, but for the here and now, the bigger question was why he had decided that moving forward was no longer an option.

"Why the hold up?" Tink said. "We must hurry."

Callum turned to me. That look in his eyes told me all I needed to know. What he said next confirmed my fear. "I saw...they are in front of us."

"But that's impossible. Tink sealed the observation level. The Banshan couldn't have got in. Not that way." Tink seemed adamant, clawing at me to encourage Callum to keep on crawling through the tube.

I wasn't so sure. If Callum had said he saw something, then I'd bet my life he had. "Have you seen anything behind us, Zane?"

Zane frowned. "Sorry, Jakey. I was too busy checkin' out Tinkles."

I offered a quick smile. We weren't sure about what was behind us, and as far as Callum was concerned, we had company ahead. What the fuck were we going to do now? We were stuck.

That noise reverberated through the tunnels. This time I heard voices. Quiet, planning voices. I swallowed hard. It was difficult to tell where the noise had come from being inside such an enclosed space.

A split second after the sound, Callum let out a shriek. "I told you. Look!"

Sure enough, a reptilian head appeared out of the gloom about two or three metres ahead. It was coming toward us at an incredible speed. Seemed reptiles didn't mind small spaces, unlike lumbering humans and a cat being.

"Fire your weapon, my friend Callum!" Tink commanded.

Callum glanced at me again. That look of horror was replaced by fear, raw and primal. "How?" he uttered through his quivering lips.

"Concentrate. The weapon will do the rest," Tink replied.

I came so I could be as close to Callum as possible. In fact, I basically got on top of him, my cock and balls resting on his backside. Again, something I wouldn't have cared about in any other circumstance. But not now. Things were desperate. He needed me.

"You can do it, baby," I whispered into his ear, running my hands across his chest and stomach. Again, doing the best I could to relax him. I knew Callum. When he was scared out of his mind, two

things happened. He couldn't concentrate and his bladder released.

I could only hope I offered some help with his concentration. I continued to soothe him. Glancing up, the Banshan was close. Only a metre or so away. I could hear Tink and Zane yell, but I had to concentrate my efforts on spurring Callum into action. He was our only hope.

Then it happened.

A light sparkled around us when Callum raised his arm. In that moment, I realised the scintillating patterns that filled the spaces in between our bodies was the shield I had activated. I must have noticed the Banshan had a weapon, and sub-consciously activated my organic enhancer.

"Now, baby," I whispered into his ear.

From Callum's index finger a thin ribbon of white, hot energy sprung. Its charge struck the reptile. The Banshan was disintegrated in a blink of an eye.

"Way cool," Callum said, slumping onto the floor of the tube.

I went with him. That was fine. I was on top of him. The contact of our skin sent erotic chills though my body. Sure, we had just escaped a very close encounter, but somehow that made it better. My feelings for Callum had strengthened. He could do anything when he set his mind to it.

He turned so he could face me. We were a

tangle of limbs, but the confined space added nothing to deter us. After our wrestle, we kissed. He parted my lips with his warm, wet and sensual tongue, and I took him into my mouth with enthusiasm.

For the longest time we chased and danced each other's tongues, my head spinning with dizzy spells, consumed by the sensation of both his taste and his touch. We embraced. I was rock hard, as was Callum. I could feel his erection press against my stomach.

"Tink thinks that we must all hurry," the cat being said.

He was right.

Callum and me parted. In the low red glow, he looked so fucking sexy, his eyes wanting, his lips wet. "You're my wonderful hero."

He smiled and said, "I love you so much, Jacob."

"I love you, too," I kissed him again. "Now, let's get a move on. Time to kick some more intruders into next week."

Soon we were all crawling through the tube once more. This time I stayed as close as I could to Callum, reaching out to reassure him every now and again. At the same time I would grope his beautiful balls or pat his arse. He chuckled when I did so. Fuck, I wanted him bad. I knew my cock was wet with my pre-cum. Kissing him always got

me horny. Why did we have to be in a spaceship light years away from home and in so much danger? Why couldn't we just be together, snug in our bed and wrapped in each other's arms? Then again, I wouldn't swap any of this for anything. Difficult times strengthened a relationship. And right now, I was so strong and so deep in love with him that I could wait for when the time was perfect to show him just how much I did want him, on every level.

We came to a dead end. Another seam became apparent and Callum ran his finger in the groove. The hatch opened with a hiss. I could see straight away without having to crawl out of the tube, why this room was called the observation level. The view was stunning.

If the cavern was a sight to behold, refracting and reflecting the sunlight and starlight, from above, the planet we were in orbit of looked like a jewel in space. The entire surface was covered in living crystal, reflecting the sunlight up into the atmosphere, creating a rainbow of colours. Their world was a shimmering orb, alive and so beautiful. Pity the place was as dangerous as it was stunning.

All of us had now emerged from the tube. Zane and Tink were hand in hand. If Callum and I were deep in love, so were they. I smiled. Our love for each other was fantastic, and in the end that's

what gave us our strength.

"We must secure the room," Tink said. "My friends, Callum and Jacob, check the nooks and storage areas. Banshan got into the tube. There may be more who were in here before level was sealed. My beautiful Zane, you come with me."

"Sure thing, Tinkles."

I grabbed Callum and together we began the search. I could see why Tink had suggested this place. The only entrance was below us, down a long flight of stairs. The observation level formed a horse-shoe shape around that lower deck. The door was lockable, a large safe-like wheel apparatus adorned the middle of it. Tink rushed down the stairs to turn that lock. Zane went with him.

Callum would be able to crack off the organic weapon no worries at all as the Banshan tried to get to us. But how did that Banshan get into the tube before us? I contemplated the worst while I felt the organic walls for seams. Sure, firing off our weapons was easy, but if we were to open a room to be confronted by a Banshan, would we be able to react in time.

Now I knew how those police officers felt in those crime drama shows on TV. Checking carefully each room as they searched a suspect's house. Callum even held his arm out in front of him, as ready as he could be to fire the weapon. I

think having used the weapon once with such success had given him much needed confidence. That, and my encouraging gropes, of course.

The first two nooks we checked were clear. Tink and Zane had joined us, starting at the other side of the level. The main wall we wouldn't have to search, that was the viewing window. It was the other three walls that worried me. Even from where I was on the far right of the level, I could see that the walls were littered with seams. A Banshan would have plenty of places to hide.

Banging noises from beyond the locked door below us soon echoed through the observation level. The Banshan had found us. If we *were* alone in here, then in a few moments we wouldn't be. Especially when I saw a spark of light, like that of a cutting tool, pierce the seal of the door below.

"We don't have much time. Prepare yourselves," Tink said, running a claw across a seam. The door opened.

Everything next happened as though it were in slow motion. Yet, there was no way I could have prepared myself. From the open doorway, six Banshan ran out. One grabbed Tink. Another Zane. The rest charged toward Callum and me.

Zane screamed something incomprehensible. When I reached out to grab Callum, used my shield to protect him, my hand shimmered to become see-through. Zane must have activated the

phase shift weapon inside him. At least we couldn't be taken as hosts.

I didn't get much chance to contemplate how wonderful Zane was by reacting so quick, even more so considering he was captured. Callum's screams brought me back to the moment. He had fired off his weapon, again and again. There were now only two Banshan running toward us.

Still, even with their comrades fallen at their webbed feet, they came. Their reptilian faces struck with anger and hatred. Seconds later, I was grabbed, rough and without care, as was Callum. Another second after that, the door was compromised and many, many Banshan poured into the observation lounge.

We were surrounded.

Chapter Twenty

“Let them go. It’s Tink you want,” Tink hissed.
The Banshan ignored the cat being.

We had all been corralled into a large nook near the left of the window wall. Three Banshan stood guard while the others milled about, talking amongst themselves in a language I didn’t understand. I had to grab Callum’s arm a couple of time to stop him from using his weapon, holding him tight. I didn’t want things to get violent, not yet. Besides, maybe they didn’t know we possessed weapons. Such a thing could prove to be an advantage later. Sure, we were phase shifted, but being on a spirit folk ship could account for the logic of that.

A Banshan, the largest of the reptile folk and adorned with a scarlet ruffle around its neck, came toward us. I couldn’t tell whether or not they were male or female, they wore no clothes. I mean, other than cloacae between their legs where I would imagine sex organs should be, they had no visible genitals. From Earth reptile biology such

creatures had internal organs, coming out when needed. Were the Banshan the same?

The large Banshan, and more than likely their leader, said, "Terminate the phase shift field or one of you will be killed for being disobedient." His face was familiar. Perhaps he was the one who had opened the communication channel and demanded our surrender.

"And when we do, you'll take us as hosts, right?" I shouted. I was pissed off. For all our efforts it had amounted to this. Here I thought we were going to rescue Mr. Barnaby. Turned out we were the ones who need to be rescued.

Before the Banshan could answer, Zane leapt to his feet and charged, screaming profanities in the way only he could manage. Tink got up, too. But he wasn't yelling out his anger. He called for Zane, a desperate cry that broke my heart.

All too late.

Zane was struck on the back of the head with a staff-like weapon by one of the leader's guards. He fell to the floor with a thud, his limbs a tangle. He didn't move. I gasped, thinking only of Zane's welfare. If one thing was certain, rendering Zane unconscious did disable the phase shift field. I shimmered back into full existence, as did Callum and Tink. We were defenceless.

"You and you will be taken for food." The leader pointed to Callum and me in turn,

punctuating his words. Two guards stepped forward. One plucked me up as easy as if he were lifting a baby from the crib. The alien was strong. The other grabbed Callum. The leader continued, "Spirit folk, you and your partner will be hosts. Your technology and all your knowledge soon to be an important part of the eternal's collective."

Tink hissed, un-retracting his claws. "If my beautiful Zane has so much as scratch on him I'll rip you to shreds, *Banshan* scum." That was the first time I had heard Tink say anything bad about anyone.

The reptile leader blinked. For the longest moment there was silence, even among the Banshan warriors. Then, slow and deliberate, he asked, "Is that a threat?"

I was taken aback. I don't know why the Banshan would have said such a thing. Surely, if it were possessed by an eternal, then its goal would be to take us away and do whatever they pleased with us. Perhaps some instincts still remained. Instincts even an eternal couldn't suppress.

"It's more than that. It's a challenge," Tink roared, his ears pressed against his head, his beautiful eyes wide with hate.

"Then prepare yourself." The Banshan warrior grabbed a staff weapon from one of his colleagues, coming to a fighting stance, legs separated for balance and at the ready.

The Banshan around us, including the ones who held both Callum and me, formed a circle around Tink and their leader. Seemed to me the Banshan were a warrior caste. Any threat would have to be acted upon. I know that notion all too well. Corey Harrington had been the same. What was it with meat heads? Why were they so worried about comparing cock sizes that everything else had to fall by the wayside? I also knew Tink had tapped into that instinct. If anything, he was buying us some time.

"What shall I receive if I am victorious?" Tink readied himself, too. His stance like a coiled spring. Every muscle, especially those of his legs, were flexed and ready to act at a moment's notice while the cat being eyed up his opponent.

It would seem I had been presented with an opportunity. Everyone's attention was focused on the imminent duel between the leader and Tink. I had to time everything to perfection if I was going to succeed with what I had in mind. With Callum's help, we would get out of this yet.

"You will be spared. You and your consorts," the leader snapped. "Now get on with it. I am ready for you."

"Fine with Tink." And with that Tink let out a meow that echoed loud through the observation lounge, baring his sharp teeth. He lunged at the Banshan while slashing his claws.

But the Banshan was just as ready. He parried Tink's first attack with a grace of movement that could only be described as poetry in motion. Tink's effort hadn't gone without reward. He slammed straight into one of the watching guards, his claws sunk deep into its chest. The reptile slumped to the floor with the last groan of its life. Its body a bloody mess to stain the organic floor by the time Tink turned, ready for his next move.

Again Tink charged, and again the leader dodged his blow. The cat being, unable to stop because of the force of his charge, struck one of the guards once more. A heartbeat later, that guard dropped to the floor, life no longer with it.

I could see what Tink was doing. In fact, anyone with the intelligence greater than that of a door mat could see that he was trying to reduce the numbers of the enemy while he fought for our survival. From the look of determination on the leader's face, he didn't see the carnage before his own eyes. He kept on parrying Tink's claws, either by dodging or striking out with the staff. Yep. Meat heads. Door mat intelligence. Thank fuck Tink was a smart one.

After three more Banshan were killed, I realised it was now or never. I had to act. I wouldn't be presented with another moment like this, the leader occupied and the rest of them fixated on the battle. In fact, the Banshan were so involved with

what was playing out, the one who held me had let his grip loosen to such an extent even I could break free.

So I did.

I screamed at Callum, "Now!"

He understood. Both of us together pulled away from our captors. Before the Banshan around us could gather their wits and realise what had happened, Callum raised his arm. At the same time I mentally asked for the shield to protect us. Seven Banshan were vaporised.

Then all hell broke loose. Every Banshan in the room came for us. But Callum did a magnificent job of killing any that approached. So many of the reptile folk were sent to oblivion, my vision became burned with the sparkle of the weapon's fire.

"Awesome, baby. Fucking awesome," I screamed and screamed as more and more Banshan were destroyed.

In the end, only Tink and the leader remained.

Callum was about to aim for it, wipe him from existence, when I caught his arm. "Let Tink deal with it. We should tend to Zane."

Zane hadn't moved. He was still unconscious. The back of his head was caked with dried blood. I swallowed hard.

"Don't move him," Callum said. "It may hurt him more. We've got to wait for Tink. Maybe

there's a medical bay on board or something."

Callum was right. But that presented another problem. Only Tink would know how to get to the medical bay as quick as possible, but he was sort of occupied at the moment. Then again, Tink's efforts hadn't been in vain. The reptile was covered in scratches, most deep and drawing blood.

If there was one person I wouldn't like to fight, it would be a cat being. What made matters worse for the leader was the fact he had picked a fight with a man who was defending the one he loved with all his heart. Tink was all claws and teeth and determination. An awesome combination.

We didn't have to wait long before the leader of the Banshan sunk to his knees and offered Tink his surrender. "End my life," it begged, lowering its head. "But know this, spirit folk, you will be hunted for the rest of your days."

Tink smiled, one filled with lust. "You may have an eternal within you, but nothing can stop instinct. That's what makes eternals weak. The hosts they chose to take."

Tink had a point. Thomas had sacrificed himself to save all of us. Now the Banshan leader had shown beyond doubt that no matter what, you are what you are. Perhaps that was the real hope in all this. Eternals may be powerful, but really, when it came down to it, they could be

defeated by something as simple as an instinct. Instinct for survival. For territory. For procreation. No matter what, every species had such primal forces ingrained into its DNA that no power could reverse it. I smiled. We had a weapon to use against the eternals, one more powerful than organic modifiers or claws or guns.

With a fluid motion and a howl of victory, Tink sunk his claws into the back of the reptile's neck. A crack of bone and a final gasp were the only sounds of resistance the reptile gave before it, too, was a mess of dead flesh on the observation level floor.

In a blink of an eye, Tink had retracted his claws and ran to Zane. Tears streaked his furry cheeks, the hurt and sorrow plain to see.

"He needs medical attention," I said.

Tink plucked him up as easy as I had been moments before by the Banshan warrior, cradling his head and making sure his spine remained as straight as possible. "Jacob. Callum. Follow Tink."

The sight of Zane, unconscious and limp in his lover's arms, made my emotions well up inside me, too. I hoped with all my heart he'd be all right. I'd die if anything happened to him. I dreaded to think what Tink would be like. He'd be inconsolable.

Callum grabbed my hand. Together we followed Tink through the ship. Sure, we still

might be surrounded by Banshan while in orbit. Heck, we may even have more boarding us this very second. But for the here and now, Zane was all that mattered.

We walked in silence.

Chapter Twenty-one

After we had walked down corridors and passed through many rooms, we came to what I believed to be the medical bay. Well, the place was adorned with all sorts of organic looking instruments, complete with a bed that I thought had been grown from a mushroom or similar fungus.

Tink rested Zane's limp body onto the bed. Purring and singing a gentle song I didn't recognise into his ear. All the while he soothed him, running his hands over his cheek and then touching every part of him. Tears continued to flow, and soon I began to cry, too.

"My beautiful Zane has been badly hurt. Tink hopes he can mend him. Tink hopes that he..." But Tink couldn't finish his sentence. His emotions had overtaken him. The cat being's shoulders heaved. He was soaked with sadness and I couldn't blame him.

I came forward, reaching out to touch him. "What can I do to help?"

Callum was crying, too, but he managed, "Zane's going to be all right, isn't he? Tell us, Tink. Tell us you can heal him. He's still breathing, right?"

I squeezed Callum's hand. "He's in a coma, baby. He might not come around at all if the damage is too great."

"No, it can't be," Callum turned so he could bury his face into my neck, weeping once I embraced him.

Tink looked at me, his eyes bloodshot. Through quivering lips, he said, "Tink will tend to his beautiful Zane. He has received a bad knock to the head. His brain has been shaken and all his neurons have all fired at once." Tink opened Zane's eyelids, one after the other. There was a distinct difference in the sizes of his pupils. Was that a sign of how bad he had been struck on the head? Tink continued, "Such a thing for a human isn't good. He may have bruising, too. Organic technology will help. Tink hopes. My friends, Callum and Jacob, you will transport Lionel to the ship. Make sure the extraction field has been activated. I don't want anyone else hurt today."

I nodded. "C'mon, baby. You heard the man."

We left medical. I think I understood Tink's reasoning. If all of us stayed in the medical bay, crying over Zane, then nothing would be achieved. At least with a task to busy us, our

thoughts wouldn't get stuck in the negatives. The way Zane was, such thoughts couldn't be avoided, but I tried my best.

Back at the observation deck, I went to the secondary control panel. Thankfully, that was located on the lower level. Away from the Banshan bodies.

I went to the panel, reaching out and touching it. "Ready as I'm ever going to be," I said to no one in particular as it lit up, bright green. For the first time I noticed that the room wasn't bathed in that eerie blue light. Then again, the glow from the planet below probably accounted for that.

What is it you want to achieve, Jacob? the computer voice said in my mind, pleasant and welcoming.

"I want to locate a human life form on the planet we are in orbit of."

Callum's face reflected confusion. "Who you talking to?"

His face was streaked with tears. At least being here had indeed distracted me from thinking the worst. Negative thoughts led to negative actions, as I had told myself many times. Getting back Mr. Barnaby was a positive. It would be good to see him, if he was still alive, that was. I shook my head. I had to stay positive. I told myself that Mr. Barnaby *was* alive.

"The computer. We're wired in to it now,

remember?"

"Oh."

Searching for human life. Please wait a moment.

"It's asking us to wait while it searches for Mr. Barnaby."

After what seemed an eternity, the computer said, *Please press the appropriate panels that light up before you. That will activate the transport.*

Before I touched the first lit up panel, I said, "Wait. Don't forget to...um...what did Tink say? Oh yeah, activate the extraction field with the transport beam."

Affirmative. Please wait.

Callum offered me a weak smile. "That was a close one, wasn't it?"

"You can say that again. Even superior technology is dumb." But I let out a laugh, one that both relieved and heartened me at the same time. Computers were computers no matter who built them.

Extraction field activated. Transport ready. Please press the panels in the correct sequence...now.

I didn't have time to blink. Panels lit up, all sorts of colours, too. It was like I was playing one of those challenge games, trying to keep up with the computer as panel after panel lit up and I had to press it in the correct order. I hoped I got it right.

When the control bench no longer lit up any

panels, I assumed I had done everything right. The computers next words confirmed my success. *Human transported and is alive and well. Detected virus eradicated.*

To hear the *alive and well* part was the best of all. We had got to Mr. Barnaby in time. Thank fuck.

“Cool. Let’s go get him,” Callum said, grabbing my hand.

He knew, just as I did, that we had to go to the main bridge. That’s where the transporter nook was.

Before we could leave the observation lounge, the computer added, *Suggest we leave orbit and get as far away as possible from the Banshan ships that are surrounding us. Sensors indicate that they are all on low power and any pursuit would be in our favour if we act now.*

“Do it!” I said.

“Do what?”

“Get the ship the fuck out of here,” I replied, grabbing his hand.

“Hell, yeah. This place has creeped me out enough.”

Again the panels lit up. I pressed them in the sequence presented. A lurch overwhelmed me and I assumed we had broken orbit.

Accelerating. Please select destination.

“Earth,” was my immediate response.

I punched the panels yet again. When done, I

said, "C'mon, baby. I think we've got an old friend to see to."

As we ran through the ship, hand in hand, I could see all the damage the Banshan folk had done. Every door was broken and many sections of wall had been destroyed, blue phosphorescent blood oozing out of the wounds. I imagined that's where Tink had sealed the bulkheads.

I heard Mr. Barnaby before I saw him. He was indeed alive. Something that made my spirit soar and that small spark of hope ignite to a fire within me. "Mr. Barnaby," I yelled out, coming up stairs toward the bridge.

When I did see him, I could see straight away that we had got to him in time. He was emaciated. His eyes deep and drawn and his body covered in dirt, bruises and cuts. His stomach had swollen, more than likely from malnutrition. The man needed medical attention.

When Callum and I were on the bridge proper, we didn't waste any time. We hugged him. The old man returned the gesture, holding us both tight. "My, my, I'm so glad to see you both. I knew you would come. I really did."

"We're just so happy to see you safe, Mr. Barnaby," I said.

"Where's Zane?" he asked. He looked around the bridge, a concerned look striking his features. Zane's absence clear.

In that moment, my thoughts returned to Zane and how helpless he was lying on that organic bed. My heart thumped loud in my chest and I swallowed hard.

Before I could reply, Callum said, "He's not good."

"I beg your pardon, my dear boy?"

I gestured for Mr. Barnaby to follow me, much like Tink would do when he wanted us to go somewhere. "We'll take you to him. I believe he'll need all the folk who love him if he's going to get through this."

Back in the medical bay, Zane's condition hadn't changed. Tink had wired him up to some sort of device, one that hovered above him and looked like a coral sponge. His chest rose and fell with a natural rhythm. At least he was alive. I just hoped with all my heart and soul that he hadn't been damaged in any permanent way.

"It's good to see you, old friend," Tink said, embracing Mr. Barnaby and patting him on his back, just like good friends did when they greeted. "But you look like you need help, too." Tink ran a stick-like thing over Mr. Barnaby once they had parted their greeting.

Mr. Barnaby said, "Good to see you, too. Now stop fussing over me. What's all this about Zane?"

For the next few minutes, Tink explained the

predicament we had found ourselves in that led to Zane being here in such a condition. While he did so he tended to Mr. Barnaby. For the longest time after that, we all took it in turns to comfort Zane, let him know just how much we cared. Sure, he was still unconscious, but for all I knew, he could hear our gentle words of encouragement and love on some level, no matter how far away his mind and thoughts might be from us.

"I think we should take turns to keep vigil," Mr. Barnaby said. "He may be unconscious for a long time and we don't want to tire ourselves waiting, now do we?"

"Tink will stay with his beautiful Zane."

"I understand," Mr Barnaby patted Tink on his shoulder. "But we must all take turns to rest. We won't be —"

"Tink will stay."

Mr. Barnaby nodded. "As you wish."

"Say, Mr. Barnaby, I think we should all get some grub. You don't look too crash hot yourself," Callum said, changing the subject to try and avoid any unnecessary uneasiness. Yes, Tink had been tending to him, but really, the best thing for the old man right now was food and rest.

Mr. Barnaby's next words supported my thinking. "I'll be all right. Nothing a good supper and a decent night's rest won't fix. Jacob, Callum, you can show me where the food dispenser is

here? These organic ships can get quite disorientating.”

I led Mr. Barnaby out of the medical bay. Soon, Callum, the old man and I were enjoying some of the many fruits the machine dispensed, chatting about each other’s respective experiences on the planet below.

My turn to sit with Zane couldn’t happen soon enough. Any thought of doing anything else, including being close to Callum in a way only lovers could, proved fruitless. I couldn’t get my concern for Zane out of my head. Instead, I went into a sleeping nook with Callum and held him tight. Thanking my lucky stars that he was safe and well.

Mr. Barnaby patted me on the shoulder just when my eyelids became heavy and sleep beckoned. I didn’t know what time it was, but I didn’t care. I knew it was my turn to comfort Zane.

I entered the medical bay. Tink was sleeping, his head rested next to Zane’s. He was purring. But not like any purr I had heard before. It was rough and uneven, emotion filled, if I had to name it. Tink’s sadness was infectious, and I couldn’t help but become choked up with emotion, too.

My footsteps must have disturbed the cat being. As I approached, he stirred, pricking up his ears.

"Hey, Tink. How is he?" I asked. I could see Zane was unchanged, but still, saying such a thing offered me some comfort. At the very least it started the conversation.

"My beautiful Zane is still in the darkness."

I sat on the mushroom bed thing. I reached out to touch Tink's hand, a hand that he had rested on Zane's chest. "We're all here for you, Tink. You know that."

"Tink knows."

For three days and nights each of us took turns to comfort, clean and intravenously feed Zane. Tink remained, always at his side. With each passing day he grew weaker and weaker, not accepting any food or drink.

In that time, as I walked with Callum through the ship, hand in hand, unable to do anything but share each other's conversation, the ship seemed to heal itself. The bulkheads regrew and the doors began to work. Many times I got lost with Callum. Corridors we had walked many times became unfamiliar when whole again.

I enjoyed those moments. Sure, I felt guilty afterwards, my thoughts should be on Zane getting better. But I couldn't help it. I needed Callum and being lost with him was as close as I dared to get in the three days we had taken to get to Earth.

On the fourth day, Callum whispered into my ear, "Please don't think me selfish, but can you make love to me, Jacob? I've missed you so much."

I didn't hesitate. I held him tight. That was the permission I required to think of something else and someone else, other than Zane and when he was going to get better.

"I so need you, too," I whispered back.

We were on the far side of the ship to the bridge and the medical bay. A nook I had affectingly named, the cloister. The main reason being because Callum and I always found ourselves here. We would come here to contemplate all that had been and all that would be. There were even benches here, too. A perfect place to show Callum my love for him.

What made the moment even more opportune was the fact that I knew Mr. Barnaby was busying himself by learning the ship's systems or keeping watch on Zane with Tink. Either way, we were alone.

"Then fucking take me," he said, his voice soaked with desperation and lust.

A few nights ago I had woken to discover that he was jacking himself off. I pretended I was asleep, but couldn't help but feel for him as his breathing became deeper and deeper while he worked himself up to climax. When he did blow

his load, and he sucked in the air though his quivering lips, he pinched his foreskin tight, capturing all his fluid. From there he released his cum into his palm and licked it clean. The evidence gone.

“Lie down on the bench, baby. I think we both need this more than anything.”

Chapter Twenty-two

I came to kiss him, but Callum had other ideas. He placed his hand onto my head, massaging my scalp. Shivers coursed through me. With a gentle push, he made his feelings clear. He wanted me to go down on him.

“You want me to suck you off, hey baby?”

“Oh, fuck yes,” he hissed through his teeth. I had to admit, I felt his urgency. This had been the longest time we hadn’t been with each other. I didn’t know how long I’d last. I was already hard, as was he.

I grabbed his cock tight, squeezing it. Letting the blood flow with more force to engorge his head even more, making his delicious foreskin retract and reveal the jewel I sought.

Callum shuddered and writhed underneath me. I could see his stomach quiver. But I gave him what he wanted. I came down to take his magnificent cock into my mouth. As soon as my lips had sealed over his sensitive skin, he let out a cry. My mouth was filled with his cum, a split

second after that.

But I didn't swallow.

"Now you can kiss me," he said with a gasp. Grabbing at me, pulling me up so I could do as he wished.

When I was eye level with him, and our stare sank deep into each other's gaze, he opened his mouth. I opened mine, letting his cum dribble off my lips and fall into his waiting mouth. When I had given him all he had given me, I pressed my lips onto his. He groaned with delight. I did, too.

For the longest time we kissed. I was soon swimming in ecstasy, unable to hold off my climax a moment longer. I had been rubbing my cock against his stomach as I embraced him. That was all the stimulation I needed. I blew my load, the warmth of my cum seeping to cover me. What a fucking relief. It was awesome and my whole body rejoiced.

We parted, and he said. "Can you go twice?"

I smiled. "Fuck yeah. Let's just clean up this mess and then I'll be set."

He grabbed my cock and proceeded to lick off the remnants of my orgasm, working his way up so that my stomach was cleaned, too. Again we kissed, but this time I laid him down and parted his legs. I was hard again. His touch and his affection, and the sheer fact I was as horny as hell, spurred me on for more.

My cock was wet, both from Callum's attention and my own fluid. Cum still dribbled from my piss slit, the sight of it so erotic. I ran my finger over my head, taking up my semen and using it to lubricate my cock. I was ready again.

"I'm so going to give it to you hard," I said, that hunger building up to the point of exploding within me.

"Oh God, yes."

I pulled at the root of my cock, letting my foreskin retract to reveal my engorged head. I didn't waste any more time. I pressed myself against Callum's arsehole. With a gentle yelp and with him grabbing me by my hips and wrapping his legs around me, I pierced him. Fuck he was tight. Leaving him for a few days had worked wonders. Then again, I dreaded the thought of not being able to be with him for so long again. I needed him and every day, too.

I let out a cry as I pushed myself in deeper. He arched his back and pulled me in more. I gained my rhythm as quick as I could. But this time my love for him was more animalistic. I yearned for him and now that I had him I gave him all I had at the most primal level.

"Fuck yeah!" I said as I pumped harder and faster, my balls slapping against him, that wonderful sound filling the cloister nook.

I had grabbed his cock, too. I pulled at him,

retracting his foreskin so I could jerk him off with more effect. I did so with so much enthusiasm, so much lust, that he would hopefully blow at the same time as I did. Which wouldn't be long for me. My stomach already filled with the familiar tingle of climax.

He was hard and his piss slit wept pre-cum. He grabbed at my hips harder, his nails scratching my skin. I didn't care. I wanted this as bad as he did. My whole body was numb with my delight. I was root deep in his arse. Just the way it should be.

"Harder, Jacob!"

I yelled again. Sweat poured off me and every muscle within me screamed out with that yell. I could feel my cheeks flush and I was only seconds away from my second orgasm. But I kept on with my actions, pushing and pumping as hard and fast as I could, like a machine possessed.

"Oh my fucking God, baby," I screamed out.

My whole body shuddered as I blew my load inside my beautiful Callum. He blew, too. I could feel each wonderful pulse of his cock in my grip as he orgasmed. Just like I hoped he would, we came together. We were one. In synch and both knowing exactly what we had to do to make each other happy. I was most certainly in heaven.

For the longest time both of us released all of our love for each other. My balls ached, now tight in my sack. But I didn't care. I had released all that

built up tension and not once, but twice. After I was spent, I collapsed onto him. Our sweat lubricating our skin while we embraced and kissed over and over. We did so for the longest time, sharing saliva and touch and getting hard all over again.

When I parted, and my lips were tingling with his attention, I asked, "Now do you want to go again?"

He laughed. "Without a doubt, Jacob."

I kissed his neck. Then his chest, concentrating on his nipples. They were hard. I was about to go down to his stomach, licking my way to his cock, when a chime sounded.

"What was that?" I asked, craning my neck to try and see if anyone was in the cloister nook with us. We were still alone.

"Probably nothing."

I shrugged my shoulders. Perhaps he was right. I kissed his alien navel ring, letting my tongue roll around it, teasing him. He laughed again. The quiver inside him so deliciously tangible.

But I was interrupted by the chime once more, something that ripped me away from any erotic thoughts. "That's got to be something," I said.

"Don't stop. I'm so ready for more." He placed his hands onto my head, just like he did before my first orgasm. "Would you like me to remind you where you were up to?"

I heard footsteps. But not ones that belonged to Tink. I sat up. Mr. Barnaby entered the cloister nook. "Ah, there you are. I had to ask the ship to locate you." He paused for a moment. "Did I interrupt something?"

The sight of us both on top of each other, legs all a tangle would have been the first clue he had. Our erections the second. But Mr. Barnaby didn't mean what he said in such direct terms. He would have meant that he *had* interrupted and that we would have a moment to stop what we were doing. Bless him. Sure, he was a wonderful man, as open minded as anyone I had ever known. But seeing two blokes make love was probably something that he wouldn't want to witness, friends or not.

"We were finished, anyway," I said. I wanted to confirm to him that he hadn't been rude.

He smiled. "Oh good. I'm glad."

Callum whimpered, but said with a sigh, "Yeah, we were done."

"So...what is it you want, Mr. Barnaby?" I asked, climbing off Callum, my erection easing now that I wasn't so consumed by his touch and intoxicated by his physical love.

"I've come to tell you that Zane is awake."

Callum sprung to his feet. "What?"

"Yes, yes. Zane is awake. Come and see. He's asked for you both."

I was taken aback for a moment. "Now why didn't you say so in the first place?" I questioned.

"I was going to." The old man proceeded back up the stairs. Callum and I followed. "But when I saw that you were busy I had to ask the ship to gain your attention in the subtlest way possible. That chime worked wonders, I believe."

"So what did you see?" Callum grabbed my hand, that knowing look of his doing nothing to quell my want for him again.

Mr. Barnaby let out a chuckle, one that reflected the jolliness I had grown to love. "Enough to know that you both love each other very much."

We went as fast as Mr. Barnaby could go to the medical bay. Once there, the sight of Zane sitting up in bed was one that filled my heart with joy. I went to him, hugging him tight. Callum did the same.

"Hey, easy on. I'm a delicate thing, you know," Zane said with a cough, but as cheeky as he could manage considering he had just woken up from a coma.

"I'm so glad you're okay," I said. I lavished him with kisses and he returned them. Callum joined in, too. Our tongues touched and the taste of Zane and Callum filled my mouth, sending shivers of delight through me and to cloud my mind with erotic thoughts.

When we parted, Zane said, "There's somethin'

you need to know, both of you."

Tink had entered the room. He was carrying a tray of exotic foods. He looked terrible, but at least those golden and blue eyes of his were alive with hope once more. "Tink was worried you were both lost." But he let out a chuckle. The cat being knew, just as Mr. Barnaby had seen, why Callum and I had disappeared.

I turned to Zane, giving him my full attention. "So what's this you've got to tell us?"

He looked away from my gaze for an instant, before he cleared his throat and said, "I'm...I'm not going with you and Cals....to Earth. I'm stayin' here with Tink."

It took a moment for my thoughts to come to any clear cohesion. I was stunned. "What do you mean?"

Again he cleared his throat. "I love you guys with all my heart—"

"We love you, too, Zane," Callum interjected.

Tink patted Callum on his shoulder. "Please, my friend Callum. Let my beautiful Zane finish."

"Thanks, Tinkles." Zane pushed himself up, trying to get more comfortable. I could tell that what he had to say wasn't easy, but something he had to get off his chest. "You two have each other. You love each other more than anythin'. But me—well, I've found the one I love more than anythin', too. But know this, I couldn't have done it without

you believing in me, Jakey. You, too, Cals.” He paused, a tear rolled down his cheek. “Fuck, you’d think this’d be easy, hey? Just so you know, I’ll always love you both with all my heart, too. ‘Sides, who’s gonna look after Tinkles here while he kicks eternal butt?”

“I understand completely, Zane.” I kissed him again. The salt of his tears touched my tongue. I knew without any doubt in my mind that what he had said had come from the deepest place of his being. He had found his soul mate in Tink. I had seen that from the first time I had laid my eyes on the cat being back in the lighthouse. They had touched each other on a level Callum and I touched each other. Again, I couldn’t be happier for Zane.

“I’m—we’ll miss you, Zane, mate.” Callum kissed him, too.

For what seemed like hours, we held Zane in our arms. Tink joined in. Finally, Mr. Barnaby said, “I think we should all leave Zane and Tink alone. I think they have a lot of catching up to do.”

“I love you, Zane,” I said, moving so that I could get up off him and out of the medical bay.

“I love you, too, Jakey. Always have and always will, you fucker.”

I smiled. Zane was indeed as beautiful as Tink had named him. “C’mon, Cals. Let’s leave these two to fuck.”

Callum added, "Yeah, I love you, too, Zane."

Zane grabbed Callum's hand, pulling him back for a moment. "You're the best. And just so you know, I'd fuck you anytime you visit, Cals. I love you with everythin' I have, as well. Same goes for you, Jakey. Keep that arse tight for me."

"Thanks," Callum said. "I'll look forward to that." If I didn't know any better I'd say Callum blushed.

"You got yourself a deal, mister," I added.

Tink said, "The ship will arrive at Earth in an hour or so. I readjusted the course through the Kuiper belt. The computer always takes the easy way. Not so with Tink."

Then the most profound thing struck me, like an epiphany. Zane was right, but on so many levels, too. We still had the eternalists to worry about. They had encroached into the human realm and were now a danger to every living being, no matter where they were in the universe.

Without another thought, I asked, "Tink, can this ship travel to the realms, too?"

Tink nodded. "Ship can do many things. It can phase shift, travel at the speed of light and realm jump."

"Why? What'cha thinking of, Jacob?" Callum came to hold my hands.

I looked him straight in the eye. "Would you like to spend the rest of your days with me,

baby?"

"Of course."

"No matter where I go?"

He nodded. "Without question. Why?"

"Good. Then it's settled. Zane, if you've taught me anything, it's to be responsible. Besides, I can't have you and Tink up here defending the Earth without any help." I tuned to look at the cat being. "Tink, take me and Callum to the dragon realm. I have a duty to fulfil. I'm the king, after all. Time I faced up to that fact."

"What?" Callum said with a gasp. "But what about the food emporium?"

Mr. Barnaby coughed into his hand. "I believe I can ask Aloysius and Suzy to take care of that. You do what you must, Jacob, my dear boy. I've had one of those eternal things inside me. I wouldn't wish that on anyone, not even the meddling Mrs. Peterson."

I gave Callum my full attention once more. "So, baby, would you be my prince? Together we'll make sure the dragon realm isn't taken by eternal and that vision I had, courtesy of the eternal inside Mr. Barnaby, will never be able to come true."

Callum's face softened. "So that's what the eternal showed you?"

"Yeah. He showed me what would happen if the clans continued to fight amongst themselves and the eternal able to run rampant."

"So a member of the enemy clan had you? That's why you were calling out to be let go all the time, right?"

I kissed him. "You guessed it. But he didn't take me, baby. He killed me. And in doing so, they took control of the last stronghold of the light in the process. But worst of all, he had killed you, too. Without effort and without care."

"Oh."

I hugged him. "So is that a yes, then?"

Callum pushed me away with the gentle touch I had come to love. He screwed up his face. "Hmm, let me see. Would I want to be married to the King of the clan of the light, be naked with him all the time in a place that's even more beautiful than the eternal home world and be surrounded by dragon folk with huge cocks? Geez. that's a hard one."

I laughed. "Tink, I believe we're going to the dragon realm."

Again, Mr Barnaby coughed. "Not without dropping me off at Earth first, of course. I have too much to do, including getting ready for the summer bargain season. You know, I've got seven hundred bottles of sunscreen on order at a special price. But it's cash on delivery. If I'm not there to pay, it's all over and the whole town will miss out."

Now Tink laughed, too. "Yes, Lionel my dear

friend. I will take you to your store first and foremost. Anything for you."

Mr. Barnaby patted Tink on his back. "Good. Good. Now, I guess this is goodbye for the here and now, to all of you."

His words struck me. It was true. This was a goodbye. But it was also the start of a new adventure. Sure, I'd no longer be in Pembroke Eve, but I would be in a place where I would make an even better contribution. Live up to my responsibilities, too. I would also have my Callum, my beautiful Callum, right there beside me. I wouldn't have it any other way.

I stood silent as Mr. Barnaby shook all of our hands and left the medical bay. He had a couple of hours before the ship arrived at Earth, but I supposed he wanted to leave us all to it. I would see him off, all of us would when the time came.

I nudged Callum. "I think we'd better go pack or something."

"But we've got nothing to pack. We're naked and...oh, yeah, I see what you mean." Callum caught on, and he offered me a cheeky smile.

I grabbed Callum's hand. We left Tink and Zane. I knew what they wanted to spend time alone. Tink was already feeding him. In fact, when Zane was back on his feet, I think Tink was going to be in for the time of his life. When Zane got that look of hunger and lust in his eyes no amount of

cock could satisfy him, not for a long time, anyway. Tink would sure be sore later. I smiled. I realised, right there and then, that Tink coming to the lighthouse when he did had been a kind of happy accident. A blessing. I suspected all along that the key we had to find was a portal to the eternal home world. I know I sure wouldn't have been able to survive without the help of the cat being.

We headed for the cloister nook. I believed my prince needed another good hard fuck before it was time to see off Mr. Barnaby and before it was our turn to leave the ship and be surrounded by the jungle and purple sky of our new home. Something I looked forward to. I thought about all we had been through. How we got our alien navel rings, our tattooed garlands and now our organic enhancers. I smiled, one full and warm. I was ready for anything. I was ready for our next adventure.

When Callum and I were in the place where we had previously made love, I turned him so I could face him, stare into his big, blue and beautiful eyes. I clamped his foreskin tight and kept my grip there for ages while I nibbled on his ear. He didn't knock my hand away. I knew there and then, that no matter what, he'd been mine. Forever and ever.

We kissed, one warm and welcome. I soon

became lost in Callum's affection, his arms wrapped around me tight. So long as I had him, then anything was possible. No matter where I found myself—on an alien world or in a strange realm—it would be right.

To be continued in the Pembroke Eve spin-off series, *Diary of the Eternal War*, Coming to eXtasy books

About the Author

My name is Mark Alders. I live in a house. This house has a street in front of it which is a good thing because if it didn't I wouldn't be able to drive down to the shop and purchase the chocolate I need on a daily basis. *giggle* Seriously, I am a mild mannered post office worker by day and an erotic romance writer (mainly male/male) at night. Not much else to say other than, like everyone else, I have bills to pay, a mortgage and family that I love and drive me crazy all at the same time. Oh, and I have a dog, too! See? Average Joe...except when I get down and write...then I let my imagination go to places I never knew existed and my characters invade my mind.