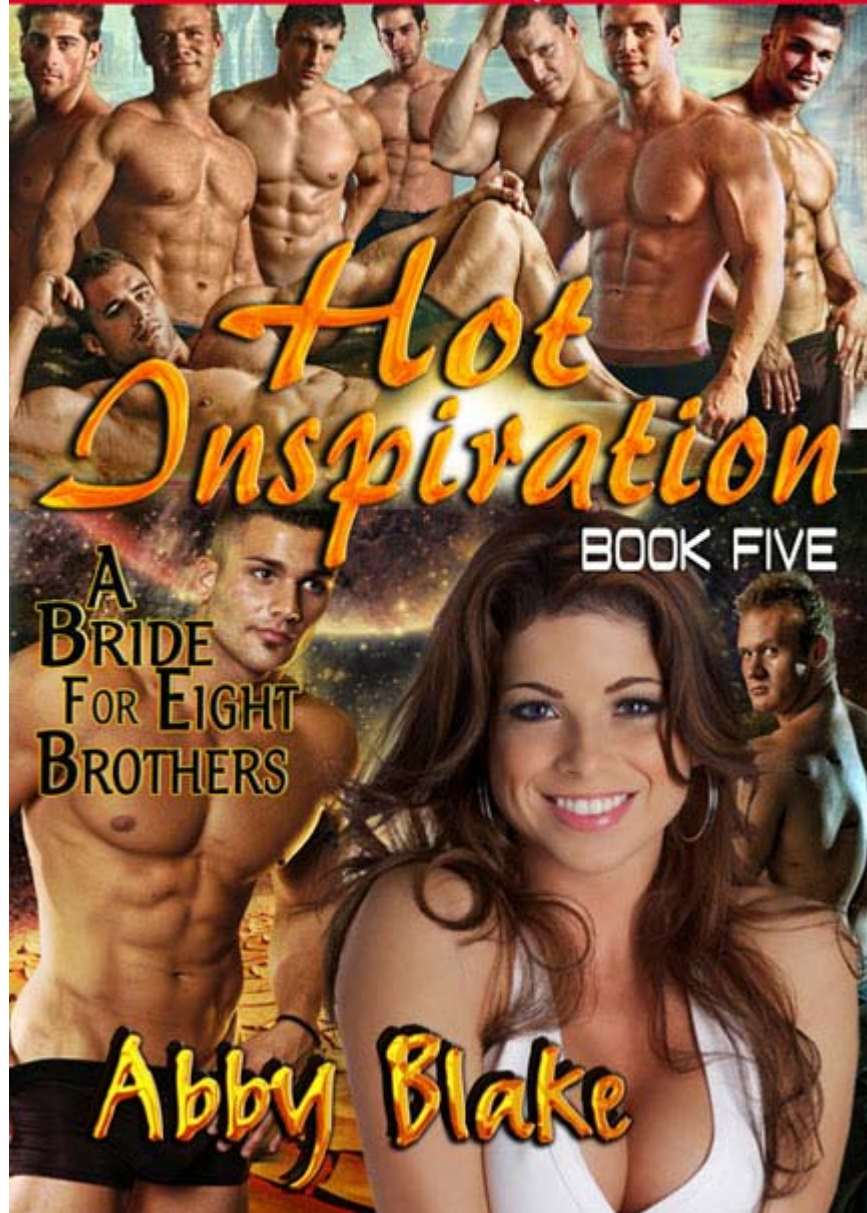


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LoveXtreme Forever



A Bride for Eight Brothers 5

Hot Inspiration

Mikayla and her husbands' new contract is on a desert planet that already has a small, well-established colony, and Mikayla is eager to sample the local markets. Despite the beautiful landscape, varied wildlife and sensually inspiring heat, things don't seem quite right. Polygamy is legal for both sexes, but it seems that only the men in this community have multiple partners. Determined to protect their wife, Mikayla's husbands try to limit her exposure to the local culture.

However, Bryce needs his leg fixed, so Mikayla and Matt finally convince him to get the surgery done. But while waiting for his brother to wake up, Lachlan witnesses a vicious assault on a young woman and steps in to help. Unfortunately, his act of compassion leaves him a target for the more fanatical occupants of this planet.

Will protecting a stranger cost Mikayla and her husbands more than they're willing to pay?

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Genre: Ménage a Trois/Quatre, Science Fiction

Length: 24,586 words

HOT INSPIRATION

A Bride for Eight Brothers 5

Abby Blake

LOVEXTREME FOREVER



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DEDICATION

For Alexandra

HOT INSPIRATION

A Bride for Eight Brothers 5

ABBY BLAKE

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Chapter One

“What’s your safe word, sub?”

Lachlan’s rough voice carried clearly across the lab, and Mikayla turned to find Brock and Lachlan both dressed in black leather, arms crossed, feet braced apart, their expressions unreadable.

Thank goodness the temperature inside the station was always set at the same comfortable level. If either of her husbands wore that leather outside on this planet, they’d probably melt into unidentifiable puddles of goo. When they’d said the planet was mostly desert, they sure weren’t kidding. Outside the temperatures nearly reached one-twenty Fahrenheit most days and fell to near freezing at night. It was certainly not a pleasant environment to work in.

Before answering her Dom’s question, Mikayla glanced over at Ryan and Ty. Technically, she was supposed to be working, and she didn’t want to leave them shorthanded. They both grinned and waved her from the lab. Mikayla smiled gratefully. They had been putting in some long hours, so she probably deserved a break. Although, considering the fact that Lachlan and Brock were obviously ready to play some serious bondage games, her break from work just might exhaust her.

Smiling but careful to keep her eyes lowered like a good little sub, Mikayla slid off the stool and walked over to stand in front of her husbands.

“My safe word is red, Sirs.”

“Excellent,” Brock said as he lifted her over his shoulder and carried her down the hallway. She always felt a little ridiculous being carried like this, so she amused herself by running her hands over the smooth contours of Brock’s leather clad butt. Lachlan chuckled when he saw what she was doing. Obviously, he had her punishment all worked out.

Inside Brock and Lachlan’s quarters, Brock placed her on her feet, and then both men stood back, arms crossed, waiting.

Mikayla quickly removed her clothes and lowered to her knees. She placed her hands behind her back, bending her arms so that each hand gripped the opposite forearm, and then lowered her gaze to the floor. It wasn’t often that her men got so intense, but it was obvious that Brock and Lachlan were both being very formal Doms today.

That was both good and bad. Good because it meant the three of them would share some amazingly incredible orgasms, but bad because she was liable to have trouble sitting for a while. She shivered as happy anticipation ran through her.

* * * *

Brock smiled at his lovely sub. Mikayla had always been the perfect submissive for him. She was feisty, loyal, loving, and challenged him at every step. She didn’t blindly obey as some Doms preferred, but she did give him her trust which was a far more precious gift.

But the last year had been rather turbulent for them all, especially for Mikayla. As much as Brock would love to have had children, his wife’s health and safety was far more important. He still felt guilty that he hadn’t been there when she’d suffered her miscarriage.

But lately, Brock had watched the woman who was quite simply the center of his universe begin to act differently. Nothing specific that he could pinpoint but something more ethereal, an emotion or a feeling he couldn't quite describe. It wasn't like before. She wasn't withdrawing like she did on the jungle planet, and it certainly wasn't that she loved them any less. In many ways it was the opposite, but it worried Brock just the same.

It was almost as if Mikayla felt herself unworthy of their love. Brock wasn't really sure of her reasoning. Jacqueline trying to seduce away Matt and Bryce wouldn't have helped, but whatever was going on in his woman's head he wanted to get to the bottom of it. If she spent all her energy on trying to be what she thought was their perfect woman, she would soon lose the person inside—the woman they'd all fallen in love with.

He stepped forward and touched the top of Mikayla's head.

"We have big plans for you, baby girl." She shivered again, and he quickly made eye contact with Lachlan. Lachlan nodded, reassuring Brock that he was reading her reactions correctly. They wanted to give her a chance to open her emotions to them, not scare the hell out of her. "What is your safe word?"

"Red, Master." He tried to shake off the dread that one word created. In the past when she'd called him master, it was because she'd been heavily immersed in a scene. The way she'd used it those times had been spontaneous and completely natural and meant more to him than he could explain.

But the fact that she'd used it practically before they'd begun was just another example of things being just a little off-kilter. She was trying hard to make him happy, and it scared him more than anything.

"Good," Lachlan said as he stepped up behind her. "Stand, sub."

Mikayla stood quickly, her graceful movements just a little too fast, a little too keen to please. Lachlan stood behind her, wrapping her forearms with a thick piece of cloth. By the time he was finished,

she wouldn't be able to use her arms at all. Brock stood in front of her, lifted her chin with two fingers, and waited for her to look at him.

"Today we're also going to give you another safe word." She looked confused but nodded her head. "Today you can use the word 'yellow' to slow things down. If anything gets too intense, just say yellow, and we'll give you a few moments before continuing."

"Yes, Master," she said again, and he had a hard time covering his reaction to her words. She must've sensed something wasn't quite right because her eyes suddenly roamed his face, and her breathing hitched as if she was suddenly worried. He let her drop her gaze to the floor as Lachlan finished securing her arms.

"Are you comfortable, sub?" Lachlan asked as he inspected his handiwork.

"Yes, mas...Sir."

Lachlan shook his head silently. He hadn't seen the way Mikayla searched Brock's expression only a moment ago, but even he could sense her unusual behavior. Submissive or not, their woman had never seemed so lacking in self-confidence.

Brock took a seat, and Lachlan helped Mikayla to lie across his knees. He knew how much she loved to be spanked like this, but lately, she'd seemed to enjoy it less and less. Today he was determined to remind her of all the reasons they loved each other.

He rubbed her bottom, enjoying the feel of her soft curves and smooth skin.

"Ten to warm up. Count them, sub."

As always, he started slowly, warming her bottom so that she could enjoy the harder blows as she neared orgasm. By the time she counted to eight her cheeks were a very pretty shade of pink. The ninth blow landed high on her thigh and she gasped at the suddenly much harder impact. The tenth hit the opposite thigh and again she gasped and squirmed.

He could smell her arousal. He ran his hand lower, finding her slippery folds, teasing and toying with the soft flesh. She moaned as

he pressed a finger deep into her core, pumping in and out slowly as she finally relaxed across his knees. Then he spanked her over and over, not giving her time to count, just smacking her again and again, hoping that she would use the word “yellow.” Her ass was practically glowing, yet she didn’t even look like she would protest. Emotion gripped him anew. He knew that this should be uncomfortable for her, but she didn’t seem inclined to call a halt. Worried that she would literally let him beat the hell out of her, he stopped.

“You are very beautiful, Mikayla.” He had to swallow the lump in his throat before he made eye contact with Lachlan. Lachlan nodded his head indicating that he understood why Brock had stopped. Brock ran his hand over Mikayla’s heated flesh, admiring the soft skin once more. “On your feet, baby girl,” Lachlan said, so Brock helped her off his lap and back onto the floor.

Lachlan came over with a blindfold, and immediately Mikayla’s breathing rate accelerated. She swallowed heavily but, despite her obvious fear, let Lachlan tie the black mask over her eyes. Brock could sense her struggling with the loss of her sight. She’d never reacted to a blindfold like this before, and the husband part of him wanted to tear the mask away and hold her close. If he hadn’t been certain that something was not right with their beautiful wife, this reaction certainly confirmed it.

With her arms tied behind her back the way they were, it lifted her breasts high. Her nipples were already beaded, and she yelped as Lachlan’s first unseen swing of the flogger caught one of the nubs. Over and over he tormented her with the soft leather pieces, the combination of soft loving strokes and hard stinging slaps making her nipples even harder and her breathing uneven.

She tried to close her legs, but a growled order from Lachlan had her spreading her stance. She moaned when a stinging blow landed on her pussy. Several more stung the inside of her thighs before Lachlan moved back up to her breasts. She was shivering, shaking with the

need to come, but Lachlan continued to pepper her breasts with stinging little slaps of the flogger.

Finally, he set the flogger aside and dipped his head to suck her swollen nipple into his mouth. As he laved one with his tongue, he gently tormented the other with his fingers. Mikayla wobbled slightly, so Brock braced her with an arm around her waist, holding her pressed hard against him as his brother worshipped her breasts and dipped a hand lower to play with her clit before plunging his fingers into her heat.

She moaned, wriggling in his hold as Lachlan fucked her with his fingers. After a few hard thrusts, he reached for the vibrator and pushed it roughly into her pussy. Her legs gave way as he fucked her over and over with the toy. Brock held her tighter, feeling her every reaction, her every breath, her every moan echo through his body.

She started to shake all over, screaming as Lachlan attached spring clamps to her nipples. “Come,” Lachlan said in a voice that brooked no arguments.

* * * *

Mikayla could barely breathe, her senses overwhelmed. Brock behind her, holding her immobile, the clamps squeezing her sore nipples, Lachlan fucking her with a toy, the vibrations traveling to her clit.

She shook, heat snaking through her as her climax burst. She groaned as her pussy grabbed at the toy, trying to suck it deeper, every muscle shaking violently as her orgasm went on and on. Heat drenched her as they continued to torment her oversensitive flesh, prolonging the orgasm, wringing every sensation from her shaking body.

She barely realized that Brock held her up as Lachlan undid the binding on her arms until Brock lifted her and placed her on her back in the middle of the bed.

Seeming nearly desperate, he lifted her legs over his shoulders and thrust his cock hard and deep. He pounded into her, fucking her, possessing her, owning her. She practically growled when he pulled away, but then Lachlan was there, thrusting into her, taking her almost violently.

She was gasping for air, shaking, shivering, on the verge of orgasm once more, when they swapped again. Over and over they took turns fucking her until she wanted to cry for relief, but she held her tongue, desperate not to disappoint her husbands.

Finally, someone grabbed her slippery clit, squeezing as Brock growled the words she needed to hear, "Come for me, baby girl."

Energy burst through her, her climax incredible as electricity forked through every part of her body. Brock thrust hard one last time, held still as he pumped his cum into her body. He pulled away, but then Lachlan took over, pushing her into another orgasm. This one less violent but hotter, deeper, swelling through her like a river of molten lava.

She gasped for air, exhaustion curling through her, thoughts of Lachlan's pampering filling her mind even as sleep called to her.

But her husbands weren't finished.

Chapter Two

“Roll over, little one.”

Lachlan touched the red streaks on Mikayla’s ass as Brock pushed her onto her knees and pushed her head forward onto the mattress. Between the spanking and the flogging, her skin was probably already tender. He really wished what he was about to do wasn’t necessary, but if Mikayla refused to call a halt to their love play when things got too intense, there was a good chance they could hurt her accidentally. Sometimes BDSM was dangerous, and refusing to use her safe word could have serious consequences.

She jumped as Lachlan’s hand landed hard against her sore flesh, but she didn’t say anything, just held herself rigid and waited for the next. Brock gave him a look of sympathy then moved to the other side of the bed and spanked her ass with his big hand.

Mikayla grunted, obviously in pain, but she buried her face in the pillows and held still. Frustrated by her refusal, Lachlan landed another blow in the same spot as the first. She cried out, the sound muffled by the pillow, but didn’t use her safe word—or even her time-out word. Brock smacked her even harder, and they both heard her sob.

But again she held herself rigid.

“Are you comfortable, sub?”

She was silent for a moment, and it was obvious she was trying to find her voice, but then she gave them the exact wrong answer. “Yes, Sirs.”

Lachlan’s hand shook, and he looked to his brother for reassurance. They didn’t want to hurt her, yet Mikayla didn’t trust

them enough to call a halt to their play. Did she think they would leave her if she used her safe word?

“Bullshit,” Brock said as he smacked her ass again. “Damn it, Mikayla. Use your fucking safe word or God help me I will spank your ass until it glows in the dark.”

She yelped as his hand hit the same place, but this time she scurried away. Even with the blindfold, it was obvious she was crying as she rolled onto her side.

But she still didn’t use her safe word.

“Mikayla,” Brock said in his deepest, most dominating voice. “Say your safe word or get back into position.” She flinched at his words, almost like he’d smacked her again, even though neither Brock nor Lachlan moved.

Lachlan had never heard his brother sound as frustrated as he did at that moment. His hands were shaking, and it was obvious that he didn’t want to spank her any more than Lachlan did, but if Mikayla refused to use her safe word, then they couldn’t play the type of bondage games they all enjoyed.

Lachlan went to gather her in his embrace, unable to see her so upset. Hell, he’d live a lifetime of vanilla sex rather than put her through this a moment longer. But Brock held his arm out, a clear signal for Lachlan to stop. Lachlan swallowed hard, hoping that Brock could get through to their beautiful wife.

“Y–yellow,” she managed to mumble through her tears.

Brock looked completely flabbergasted by her answer. Yellow was supposed to be a signal for her to call a time-out, but it was obvious that Mikayla was finished. She needed more than a time out. She needed to call a complete halt.

“Fine,” Brock said, sounding exasperated. “I’ll give you one minute and then I want you back in position.”

Mikayla gasped, and it sounded like the word “no” escaped her lips, but Brock held Lachlan back once more. Brock rummaged through his drawers, found what he was looking for, and headed back

to the bed. He made certain to slap the leather belt against his hand a few times to let Mikayla know what was coming. Her ass looked so sore that Lachlan knew the belt would be very painful.

“That’s one minute, sub. Back in position.”

Unbelievably, Mikayla moved back into position, her head down, her ass up.

“Damn it, Mikayla,” Lachlan said as Brock moved back into position and went to hit her with the belt.

Mikayla moved, and Lachlan could see the relief on Brock’s face as his blow missed its mark.

“I can’t hear you, Mikayla. Say. Your Damn. Safe word!”

“Red,” she said as a sob tore from her throat. Brock immediately dropped the belt and gathered her into his arms. She clung to him, shaking violently as Lachlan smoothed a hand over her hair.

“Good girl,” Brock said shakily. Lachlan pressed a kiss to the top of her head and then turned to the bathroom to go run a cold bath. There was a good chance that Mikayla wouldn’t sit comfortably for quite a while, but at least the cool water would sooth the stinging flesh and help reduce any swelling.

* * * *

Brock held his stubborn wife in his arms as tears flowed down his own cheeks. He hadn’t realized just how insecure Mikayla had been feeling until she’d tried to give him everything she thought he wanted at a huge risk to herself. Their sex life was intense and amazing, but if he couldn’t trust her to use her safe word, then they wouldn’t be able to play this way any longer.

He tried to hold her sore flesh away from his lap, but it meant he couldn’t remove her blindfold. He considered leaving her blinded to his own reaction but knew she needed to see how much this lesson had hurt them all.

“Take off the blindfold,” he said quietly. She moved immediately to comply, but she kept her eyes closed. “Look at me.”

She finally opened her eyes, blinking against the harsh light for a moment before she was able to focus on his face. She cried harder and whispered the words “I’m sorry” over and over.

“Why are you sorry, Mikayla?”

“I’m s–sorry I failed you.” She wiped a hand down her face as she made an obvious effort to hide her distress.

“How did you fail, baby girl?” She shrugged, sucking in air awkwardly, clearly trying to rein in her emotions and hide from him once more. “How did you fail, baby girl?” he repeated more forcefully.

“I couldn’t give you what you want.”

“And what exactly do you think we want, Mikayla.” Again she shrugged.

Lachlan came back into the room, his concern written clearly on his face.

“Answer him, Mikayla,” Lachlan said in a softer tone than Brock could’ve managed at this moment.

“I–I’m s–sorry. I just don’t want to lose you. I don’t know h–how I’d live w–without you.”

“You think we’re going to leave you?”

She took a deep, halting breath but nodded when the words wouldn’t leave her mouth.

“Damn it, Mikayla,” Lachlan said in a voice so angry even Brock flinched in surprise. “We will never leave you. We love you. You know that.”

Mikayla’s anger seemed to stir, and she sat up in Brock’s lap, oblivious to the pain she must be feeling. “But how long before you resent me for not giving you a family?” She wiped angrily at the tears that still flowed down her face. “What happens when you realize I’m too much of a coward to do the right thing and get out of the way?” She struggled to climb off Brock’s lap, so he helped her to her feet

and watched in amazement as she stalked toward Lachlan. “One day we’ll be old and gray,” she yelled angrily, “and you’ll look at our empty lives and wonder why you didn’t set me aside and find a woman who could give you the family you deserve.”

“No,” Lachlan said quietly. “I’ll look back at our lives and know that I spent it with my soul mate. I’ll count every one of our days together as a blessing, and I will never, ever regret loving you.”

“None of us will,” Bryce said from the doorway.

Mikayla nearly leapt from her skin, obviously surprised by the appearance of the rest of her husbands. They’d all known what Brock and Lachlan had planned, and with the practically paper thin interior walls of the station, Brock had been a little surprised that none of them had stepped in when things had gotten so intense. But he was grateful that his brothers trusted him to get to the bottom of Mikayla’s issues.

“Mikayla,” Matt said as he moved closer to the woman crying in Brock’s arms. “We love you, the real you, not the woman you’ve been pretending to be.” He knelt on the floor beside Brock and touched his wife’s face gently with his fingers. “The woman I fell in love with has a temper as volatile as my own. She doesn’t let any of us run her life. She makes her own choices and decisions and somehow holds her own against eight husbands willing to coddle her.”

“And she knows when to use her safe word,” Lachlan said as he took her from Brock’s arms and carried her into the bathroom.

Brock glanced around at his brothers. It was obvious they all felt relieved to have Mikayla’s issues out in the open. It was also obvious that they each had a plan on how to handle their wife’s insecurities in the future.

“I think maybe we need to remind our beautiful wife of all the reasons she fell in love with us,” John said as he headed toward the door. Brock nodded his agreement.

“She seems to have forgotten,” Matt said with a nod of his head.

“She has been working too hard,” Ryan added.

“Perhaps it’s time for a little fun.” Ty said it with a straight face, but they all managed to smile at his suggestion. Life had been way too serious in recent times. Maybe fun was exactly what Mikayla needed.

* * * *

Mikayla sank gratefully into the cold bath water. Her ass still felt like it was on fire, and no amount of crying or emotional outburst was going to let her forget it.

Lachlan saw her flinch, and he leaned over and pressed a gentle kiss to her mouth.

“Do you understand why we had to do this?” he asked as he pulled away.

His quiet question brought tears to her eyes once more. She’d barely realized the change in her own behavior, but Brock and Lachlan had been absolutely right. She’d been growing more and more concerned over the past few months that one day they would become tired of her and find no reason to stay married.

She nodded in answer to his question, but found her voice when his eyes narrowed at her silent agreement. “Yes, I’m sorry that it was necessary.” She shuffled a little in the bath to find a more comfortable position. “I didn’t mean to do what I did. It just sort of happened.”

Lachlan smoothed the hair from her eyes. “Little one, you need to trust us, all of us. No one is going to leave just because you express an opinion. Hell, your sassy, take-none-of-our-bullshit attitude is what made us fall for you in the first place.” She smiled softly, remembering some of the arguments she’d had with them over the past couple years. Mikayla and her husbands had disagreed on many, many occasions, but they’d always found a compromise.

And besides, arguing lead to makeup sex.

She grinned as the thought flitted through her head, but Lachlan laughed and leaned back against the wall. “Whatever that thought

was, I dare say it'll be a while before you find it comfortable enough to follow through."

She stuck her tongue out at him and suddenly, as if a massive weight had lifted from her shoulders, felt like her old self. Stunned at how far she drifted from her own personality, she fell backward onto her ass. She hissed as the tender flesh touched the rough bottom of the bath.

"Why are you so sore, Mikayla?" Lachlan asked in his most dominant voice.

She eyed him incredulously, unwilling to hide her reactions any more as memories of the hardest spanking she'd ever experienced sent horrible goose bumps all over her spine. She was about to start one of those arguments they all claimed to have missed when the answer to his question finally sank into her brain. Damn, she felt lucky that she'd moved away from the leather belt.

"Because I didn't use my safe word."

Lachlan nodded, stepped closer, and grasped her chin so that she had no choice but to look him in the eyes. "Little one, trust goes both ways. We need to be able to trust you to use your safe word. If you don't, we could hurt you quite seriously in some of the games we play."

She closed her eyes as tears threatened to fall again. She could see she'd hurt him badly, but all she could do was promise to use her safe word in the future. Hopefully, she could rebuild the trust between her and Lachlan and Brock quickly. Although, she suspected as she once again moved to try and ease the pain in her ass, this wasn't going to be her last sore bottom anytime soon.

Chapter Three

“No, you have the day off,” Ryan said, blocking the doorway as she tried to enter the lab.

“But—” Mikayla managed to say before a hand covered her mouth.

“No buts,” Ryan said with a mischievous grin. “You’ve been working way too hard. Why don’t you go spend some time with Matt and Bryce? They’ve got today off, too.”

She knew she was being set up but felt immensely grateful. Sitting on any stool, padded or not, at the computer for hours on end was not very appealing when her ass was still sore.

She leaned up and dropped a soft kiss on Ryan’s lips. “Thank you,” she whispered. He dragged her to him, kissed her so thoroughly she felt weak in the knees, and then sent her on her way. She was still wobbly when she reached Bryce and Matt’s quarters.

But she found their quarters empty. So she stood in the middle of the room for a full minute wondering what the hell to do now. Surely they’d known she was coming. Ryan had made his *suggestion* as if he knew Bryce and Matt were waiting for her.

She turned to leave the room and practically ran into her missing husbands.

“There you are,” Matt said, sounding relaxed. “How does your ass feel?”

She was ready to lie and say it was fine, but memories of the reason for yesterday’s spanking had her answering honestly. “Still sore, but not as bad as I was expecting.” And that was the truth. She’d expected to wake a whole lot sorer today, but whatever cream

Lachlan had soothed over her reddened skin before they'd gone to sleep had worked really well.

"Bend over," Bryce said in a tone that was neither negotiable nor lascivious. She did as she was told and sighed as the cooler air touched her skin when he lifted the material of her sundress. Mikayla tried not to giggle as they inspected her sore bottom. Head down, ass up, and neither of her men seemed inclined to fuck her.

"The cream worked well," Matt said as he soothed a hand over the slightly sore flesh. "I'll put some more on now and then some before bed tonight, and you should be fine by tomorrow."

"As long as you remember why you ended up with a sore ass in the first place," Bryce added.

"Trust me," Mikayla said on a self-deprecating laugh. "That is one lesson I will not forget in a hurry."

"Good," Matt said as he retrieved a tube of cream and smoothed it over her bottom and thighs. She could already feel the lotion working. It must've had some sort of numbing agent included because by the time they let her stand, she couldn't feel any pain at all.

"Now," Bryce said as he rearranged her clothes and she was decent once more, "we have a surprise for you."

She grinned happily. As a kid in foster care, she'd learned a long time ago to hate surprises, but life with her husbands was proving that some surprises were worth having. She let them lead her out of the main area of the research station and into a room that seemed to be an enclosed annex of sorts. But it was the small pool of water that drew her attention.

They were sort of outside, but not. It was steamy and humid in the tiny, ventilated room, but definitely not as hot as outside. Bryce and Matt both stripped off and then turned to help her out of her clothes. Mikayla's light sundress had quickly dampened from the wet heat and clung to her skin uncomfortably. She raised her arms gratefully so that her men could lift it over her head.

Gloriously naked, Bryce dipped his head and captured her lips with his own. It started out a gentle caress but quickly morphed into heated passion. Matt pressed up against her back, peppering soft kisses against her neck, his hands roaming over her hips, his cock gently brushing against her ass.

Matt broke the kiss, turned her around and caressed her neck and shoulders as his brother claimed her in a devastating lip-lock of his own. Her knees wobbled as the three of them finally lowered into the warm water.

Though small in size, the rock pool was surprisingly deep in the middle, and Mikayla found herself clinging to Matt's neck as he stood in the deepest part. She wrapped her legs around him and could feel his erection nestled against her pussy. "Is that for me?" she asked with a broad smile.

"Always," Matt replied as Bryce pressed up to her back, and she felt his cock brush against her anus. Matt kissed her softly, leisurely running his tongue over her lips, seeking entrance to her mouth. She opened for him, sucking hard against him, feeling more relaxed than she had in weeks.

"I love you," she whispered when they finally broke apart.

"I love you, too," Matt said seriously, "and if you ever forget it again we are all going to take turns spanking your beautiful ass." Her butt cheeks clenched at his threat, accidentally caressing Bryce's cock.

He groaned softly and bit her earlobe before whispering, "That wasn't supposed to turn you on."

She giggled at his teasing. She knew they meant what they said, but since she had no intention of forgetting how much her men loved her, there was little chance of all eight of them spanking her on the same day. *Although...*

Both of her men groaned when she shuddered and her ass and pussy pulsed with excitement. "Wench," Bryce teased as he took her from Matt's embrace. Matt turned to the shallower side of the pool,

lifted himself onto the edge and held his arms open for Mikayla. With Bryce's help, she quickly crawled over Matt's big body and tried to lower her throbbing pussy onto his erect cock.

But he held her still, trapping her against him so that his delicious erection was pressed against her belly. She growled in frustration until she felt something cold touch her anus. Despite how many times the three of them had done this, Bryce had never taken her ass, and the thrill of finally joining with him in that way wound through her lower body. She wriggled in anticipation as he massaged the lubricant into her back passage. He stopped when she gasped at the incredible sensation, but Matt was quick to reassure his brother.

Mikayla could feel her pussy beginning to throb as her excitement ramped higher. Without thought, she began to squirm against Matt, trying to get closer, trying to ease the arousal she was feeling. Bryce removed his fingers and a moment later replaced them with the head of his cock. Matt held her down, pressing her hard against him, refusing to let her move.

Bryce grasped her hips, pulling her closer as his cock eased into her back passage. She moaned with relief when he pumped harder, pushing deeper, thrusting into her heat as she whimpered and kissed his brother.

Matt's hands roamed over her back and neck, his fingers finally threading through her hair as he mastered her with his kiss. Carefully, Bryce thrust into her ass, pulled back slowly, and then rammed into her again. Over and over he claimed her dark hole, his cock stretching her, filling her, his movements rubbing her engorged clit against Matt's hard cock. She started to shake all over, her breathing labored, her excitement nearly overwhelming. She moaned as Bryce fucked her over and over and over.

Her arousal spiraled higher, her need more acute, more desperate. She wriggled, pressing hard against him, gasping, groaning, aching for release. As her climax started, Matt lifted her slightly, slammed his cock into her pussy, and started fucking her like a wild man. No

longer able to control his movements, Bryce pounded into her again and again until she was screaming in ecstasy. Her orgasm burned through her like a brush fire, scorching her heart and soul as her men branded her with their love.

* * * *

Bryce could barely breathe. Mikayla's back passage squeezed his cock rhythmically as she came apart in their arms. His own orgasm tore through him, emptying his seed deep into her ass, his mind as exhausted as his body.

He held still a moment, his cock wedged deep in his wife's glorious ass, but then his leg cramped, and he quickly withdrew. Unfortunately, he wasn't fast enough.

She turned immediately, pinning him with her gaze, her expression showing that she knew exactly what he was doing. It didn't help that thanks to their connection through Mikayla, Matt had also felt Bryce's sudden withdrawal.

"When are you going to get that fixed?" Matt asked quietly.

Mikayla raised an eyebrow, daring him to deny the pain he'd just felt. Refuting it was probably no less wrong than what Mikayla had done by refusing to use her safe word, but he couldn't quite convince himself to travel back to Earth to get his leg fixed properly. Every time he closed his eyes, he could see Matt bleeding and Mikayla facing an assassin's gun. It didn't matter that she hadn't been shot or that Matt had survived his injuries. When Bryce closed his eyes it was what he saw. He never wanted to see his family in danger again. He especially didn't want them in danger because of him.

"Soon," Bryce managed to mumble. In some ways, he was endangering them by not getting his leg fixed—his main duty was security after all—but every time he finally managed to talk himself into it, something happened, and he found an excuse not to.

“What about this planet?” Mikayla asked. “There’s a fairly well established colony. Maybe their medical facilities are capable of fixing your leg.”

Damn. He hadn’t even thought of that. At least while they were on contract, getting his leg fixed was something he’d do in the future. But if they had adequate medical facilities here, it was probably more convenient and definitely safer for him than traveling back to Earth. But it didn’t stop Bryce searching for an excuse to avoid the surgery altogether.

Unfortunately, with his brain still mush from post-coital bliss, he wasn’t thinking fast enough, and Mikayla somehow managed to extract a promise from him that he would make immediate inquiries.

Damn.

* * * *

Mikayla silently fumed as she faced down her husbands. She hadn’t left the station since they’d landed on this planet, and now they were trying to deny her the chance to travel with Bryce to his doctor’s appointment.

“Why not?” Mikayla asked, barely managing to voice the question without pouting. How the hell she’d managed to hold her tongue for so long was simply beyond her. She barely recognized the woman she’d been before Brock and Lachlan had literally spanked her back to her old self.

“Because we don’t know this planet very well,” Bryce said, sounding perfectly reasonable.

“Bullshit,” she said, trying to smile through her anger. “You’ve all traveled into town on more than one occasion. That’s plenty of time to determine if the planet is safe for me to wander through a few market stalls with four damn bodyguards.”

Ryan and Ty smirked at the bodyguard crack but wisely stayed out of her argument with Bryce. “Honey,” Matt said. It was obvious

simply from his cajoling tone that he would take his twin's side in this argument. "We just want to be certain you're adequately protected, and the best way to do that is for you to stay here."

"Oh for fuck's sake," she said, turning her wrath on Matt. "Do you have any idea how fucking isolated I feel here? Do you?" Matt gave her that hurt look that she would've fallen for a couple of years ago, but she was wise to his tactics now. "Don't!" She held her hand up to silence whatever platitude he was going to throw at her this time. "I'm coming with you, and that's all there is to it. If you think I'm not safe, then do something to make sure I am. But I will not spend one more minute being coddled by men who say they love me but won't let me make decisions for myself."

She heard Ty try to hide his laughter with a cough, and she rounded on him, ready to pick up with him where she'd left off with Matt. But Ty held his hands up in surrender.

"Don't blame me, darlin'. Matt's the caveman who always needs to be in control."

Too true.

"Fine," Matt said, sounding completely and thoroughly exasperated. "You can come with us to the market and to the hospital with Bryce, but I will drag you back here at the first sign of trouble." He stood in front of her, hands on his hips, ready to argue some more. But Mikayla wasn't crazy. She knew when to compromise.

"Of course," she said with what she hoped was a nonthreatening, not-too-innocent smile. Matt gave her an assessing look but turned to Bryce to make arrangements.

Within the hour, they were in the flying pod headed into town. According to the descriptions her husbands had given her, it wasn't exactly a thriving metropolis. It did contain many small tourist retreats and family-run businesses, and from what she understood, the local hospital was quite well provisioned. Mikayla really hoped they could help Bryce.

She knew exactly why he hesitated to get his leg fixed. She'd been lying in his arms more than once when he'd had the nightmare, reliving the day when Matt had been shot by an assassin who'd mistaken him for Bryce. Mikayla hadn't been hurt, but it was as if Bryce's worst fears played out in his dreams. Each time he'd had the nightmare, she'd soothed him with quiet words and gentle touches until he'd either fallen back to sleep or grabbed her and made love to her like he couldn't quite believe she was still with him.

Today he seemed to be in a little more pain than usual, and she wondered if his muscles were tensing up from stress. It was obvious he *really* didn't want to spend any more time in hospital.

They arrived early for Bryce's appointment, so they had time to wander through the market stalls. Mikayla soaked up the atmosphere. As much as she loved living at the station with her husbands, it was a very isolating experience. Hopefully, Tracey and her husbands would visit them on this planet soon. They'd originally planned to visit them on the jungle planet, but with the mouse tears pheromone, it had simply been too dangerous. After the fucked-up laws on the ice planet and the messed-up effects of nature on the jungle planet, it was quite a relief to find a planet that could almost be considered normal.

Well, normal in an alien sort of way. Some of the creatures they'd been studying were downright grotesque. One small snake-like critter they'd found had so many internal fluid pouches that it looked like a pile of bubbles until it started to move really fast. Fortunately, the bubble-snake, as Mikayla had called it, was quite timid and more likely to move away when it moved really, really fast. Another creature they'd found had dozens of hollow legs, all capable of carrying water. A couple of beetle-like creatures seemed to survive without any water at all.

In the center of the market, several food stalls had been set up. It was strange to see something that looked like barbecued chicken sitting next to roasted bubble-snake in the windows. As adventurous as Mikayla tried to be when faced with new cultures and

gastronomical delights, she was quite ready to draw the line at roasted bubble-snake.

Her men shuffled her toward a women's clothing stall, and she quickly found herself inundated with suggestions on what they could buy for her. It seemed a little silly to buy heaps of clothes when she spent practically every moment inside the environmentally controlled science station. Add that to the fact that she had eight husbands who mostly preferred for her to be naked, and her need for pretty clothes was rather small.

She ended up buying another loose fitting pantsuit similar to the one she wore to the markets. With the sun so hot, it was necessary to cover every piece of skin to avoid severe sunburn, but since she was rarely in the sun, two outfits were plenty. She did, however, notice Ryan and Ty purchase a handful of soft, filmy scarves, and she had a moment to wonder what they had in mind before Bryce and Matt hustled her to the next stall.

"Scoooz me," a young child said as she ran up and tugged on Mikayla's shirt, "are you a p'incess?" Mikayla smiled at the gorgeous little darling. She was maybe four or five Earth years old with a head full of golden curls that not even her sunhat could tame.

"Sorry, sweetie pie, I'm just a regular girl, not a princess."

"Oh," the child said looking very disappointed. "I thought you was a p'incess coz you got so many guards." Mikayla wanted to smile at the child's adorable expression but didn't want to upset her so managed to keep a serious face.

"No, sorry, no guards, just my overprotective husbands."

"Husbands? How many you got?" the child asked with disbelief. Before Mikayla could answer, the little girl's face scrunched into annoyance. "You only alloweda 'ave one."

Mikayla was about to explain when a woman hurried over to the child, grabbed her by the arm, and dragged her away. Mikayla could hear the mother lecturing her daughter over wandering away in a busy marketplace and talking to strangers, so Mikayla didn't protest the

woman's rude behavior. If she were a mother, she'd likely react the same way.

* * * *

Bryce felt his heart leap into high gear. Something about the child's demeanor certainly set his teeth on edge. He supposed it wasn't unusual for a child that age to not understand polygamy laws, but it was unexpected to hear her absolute conviction regarding monogamy. He tried to brush it off as an isolated incident, but the more he noticed the people around him, the more he worried. Once you separated tourists from locals, there seemed a very obvious trend—polygamy was common, but only the men had multiple wives. None of the women seemed to have more than one husband.

"Time to go," Bryce said, trying to sound casual and failing miserably. He only hoped Mikayla mistook his behavior for tension over the coming doctor's appointment.

Several hours later, the doctor said the exact opposite of what Bryce wanted to hear.

"The good news, Mr. Davidson, is that we have the facilities here to fix your leg. I'm confident that we can restore one hundred percent movement and remove the residual pain from your original accident. I must say, I've never seen such a poor repair job. You may want to consider suing the doctor—assuming he was a doctor and not some veterinarian."

Mikayla went to open her mouth, but Bryce managed to cut her off.

"Actually, it's funny you should mention that. I broke it falling down a crevice on an ice planet." He could feel Mikayla's reaction to the lie—he was telling Brock's story after all—but thankfully she kept her mouth shut. "The only medical help I could get was from my brothers, who just happen to be veterinarians."

“Oh,” the doctor said with a quiet chuckle. “I suppose that rules out getting a hold of your previous medical scans.”

“Correct,” Bryce lied. Damn it, he should’ve thought this through a little better. Trying to get a copy of his old medical records would probably alert the exact wrong people to his whereabouts. He tried to hide the heated feeling of dread as it slithered through his veins.

“No problems,” the doctor said with a friendly smile. “We’ve got the new scans. They’re the most important. I can book you in for surgery...this time next week.” The doctor scratched his head for a moment. “I’m still trying to get used to the calendars on this planet. It’s a human colony for pity’s sake. You’d think they stick with the seven-day week.” He flicked through his appointment device a couple more times. “Okay, eight days from today. You’ll need to stay overnight, but as long as you have someone to help you, and barring complications, I can’t see any reason why you shouldn’t be able to head home after that. You’ll need to visit the physiotherapist a time or two, but then you’ll just need to follow his advice and you should be good as new in a few weeks.”

The “good as new” part sounded very tempting. It was the “few” weeks part that was making him nervous. But he knew Mikayla wanted him to get it fixed. And the pain was probably exacerbating his issue with nightmares.

“Okay,” he said, hoping he wouldn’t live to regret it.

Chapter Four

Mikayla knew Bryce was concerned about the surgery, but it was when she'd spoken to the young child in the market that his tension had wound much tighter. Now that they were finally back at the station, she had every intention of getting some answers.

She'd already figured out his reasons for providing Brock's broken leg story rather than his own, but she felt a little queasy that she still didn't know how he'd received the original injury.

He must've seen the questions on her face because he lifted her off her feet, stuck his tongue in her mouth, and very thoroughly derailed her thoughts. By the time he dropped her in the middle of his bed, she was completely naked and totally horny.

Bryce kissed the sore lines where the bra had cut into her flesh. She'd considered going to town without the torturous apparel—with the layers of clothing it would've been difficult to notice she wasn't wearing one—but her sense of propriety wouldn't quite let her leave home without underwear. It didn't matter how much Brock and Lachlan growled. She planned to always wear undergarments in public.

Bryce slid lower down the bed, sucking her nipple into his mouth and tugging gently with his teeth. She undulated against him as the sting morphed into heat and traveled straight to her clit. His hands smoothed down her stomach, caressing lower as he found her dripping slit and then pressed inside. She arched off the bed at the unexpectedly rough invasion, but her husband soothed her with soft kisses, his fingers thrusting into and out of her slick pussy as his mouth found her clit and sucked hard.

Her ass and belly began to tingle, her whole lower body moving rhythmically against his mouth. He pressed her down with his forearms, holding her captive for his torture. Her hands found his hair, grabbing at him as he tormented her throbbing clit.

Heat snaked through her and she was about to explode when the bedroom door burst open. Ryan and Ty both entered the room, and she growled low in her throat at their chuckles.

“Oh, sweetheart, you look so beautiful like this.” Ryan stepped closer to touch her face, and she had the ridiculous urge to bite his hand. He laughed and tapped her lips with his finger.

“We have a new game,” Ty said as he stepped closer. Bryce moved away and let them maneuver Mikayla onto her hands and knees. She was still shaking—her orgasm was that close—but she was intrigued enough not to yell at them just yet.

“Let me tell you the rules of the new game,” Ryan said as he stepped in front of her and lowered his jeans. His long, thick cock bobbed in front of her as he continued with his instructions. “Rule number one. Whoever comes first gets punished.”

“H-How,” she managed to stutter out. Her ass might not be sore anymore, but she planned to keep it that way for a while longer.

“Nipple clamps, clit clamp, butt plug,” Ty said with a mischievous grin.

“Uh-huh,” Mikayla said her voice dripping with skepticism. “You’re telling me that you’ll wear nipple clamps if you lose?”

“No, sweetheart,” Ryan said with an identical smile to Ty’s, “we’re telling you you’re going to lose.”

She laughed, realizing that they were probably right. Her orgasm was still simmering below the surface, and it wouldn’t take much to send her over the edge. She took a deep, shuddering breath, trying to calm herself. “But what do I get if I win?”

“Nipple clamps, clit clamp, butt plug,” Ty managed to say with a completely straight face.

“Fine,” she said, laughing openly now. She should’ve known any game Ryan and Ty came up with would be rigged in their favor.

“Ready?” Bryce asked as he rolled onto his back and slid in between her thighs. He gripped her hips and pulled her lower so that he could suck her clit into his mouth. She barely got the word “yes” out before Ryan thrust his cock deep into her mouth.

She sucked on him, trying to concentrate on driving him out of his mind rather than what Bryce was doing to her already throbbing clit. But it didn’t work. The heat from before returned with a vengeance, and she sucked on Ryan harder, trying to stop her impending release. But then Bryce thrust his fingers back into her pussy, and she was lost.

Every muscle jumped and pulsed as orgasm swept through her. She sucked harder on Ryan, trying to take him over the edge with her, but her pussy convulsed around Bryce’s fingers, and she had to release Ryan to take a deep breath.

Heat rolled over her and through her and back over again as Bryce continued to suck her clit and finger-fuck her pussy. Finally, the trembling stopped, and she dropped her head to the bed, exhausted.

“My, that is quite disappointing,” Ty said as he lifted her up onto her knees. “What punishment would you like first?” She rolled her eyes at his obvious glee. All of the “punishments” would make it more difficult for her to hold back her orgasm, so she had very little chance of winning this game.

“You choose,” she said, knowing that they’d probably override any choice she made anyway.

“Excellent, nipple clamps it is.”

Ryan and Ty leaned over either side of the bed and snagged a nipple each with their mouths. Bryce still lapped at her pussy, licking and suckling the cream of her last orgasm, holding her close to orgasm once more. She gasped as Ryan and Ty attached the clamps to her nipples at the same time. She breathed through the sting, waiting for the pain to morph into pleasure.

But her men had other plans.

Ty and Ryan lowered her back onto her hands and knees, and then Ty pushed his cock against her lips. “Ready for round two, darlin’?” She answered by opening her mouth and sucking him deep. He groaned at her immediate response but grabbed her head to slow her movements. She wanted to protest that he was cheating, but then Bryce did something to her clit at the same time that Ryan reached under her and yanked on the chain connecting the nipple clamps.

Heat burst from her breasts, the pain shooting straight to her clit, Bryce’s movements tilting her over the edge once more. She screamed around Ty’s cock as wave after wave of liquid arousal shot through her veins. Panting hard but desperate to win at least one little victory, Mikayla sucked Ty back into her mouth and swallowed around the bulbous head again and again and again.

Finally, he rewarded her with his climax, and she drank him down greedily, humming against his cock as she celebrated her small win. Ty finally pulled away from her, smiling as he touched her face. “Too late, darlin’. You came first, so you’re due another punishment.”

She smiled despite herself and watched with both relief and trepidation as he spread lube over the plug he planned to shove up her ass. Ryan pushed her shoulders lower to the bed, her pussy still hovering over Bryce’s mouth but her ass presented for Ty’s taking. He pressed the slippery part hard against her anus, and she forced her muscles to relax and accept the invasion. The slight pinching, stinging feeling faded, leaving every nerve on edge. She ground her teeth, trying to calm herself. Hell, at this rate, she was liable to orgasm before any of her men touched her.

“Ready?” Ty asked as he tapped the butt plug and sent heat shimmering through her once more.

She lifted to her hands, determined to take Ryan with her this time. Bryce lapped gently at her pussy as Ryan pushed into her mouth. He started thrusting in a steady rhythm, so she sucked him harder, swirling her tongue around the head of his cock, trying to

drive him as wild as they did her. She could feel him succumbing, sensed his orgasm was about to begin, but then Ty tapped the butt plug, Ryan pulled the chain on her nipples, and Bryce bit down on her clit, and she was thrust hard into orgasm once more.

Completely exhausted, Mikayla almost didn't swallow as Ryan's cum filled her mouth.

"Oh well," Ty said, sounding rather excited. "I guess that means you lose again."

Ryan and Ty practically held her up as Bryce connected the rubbery alligator clamp to her clit.

Her orgasm started almost immediately. Every muscle shaking, every nerve ending on fire, every breath labored. Bryce moved quickly, standing behind her, thrusting hard, deep into her pussy, fucking her like a wild man. She shook, she whimpered, she screamed as wave after wave of ecstasy flooded her whole body.

Deeper, harder, over and over Bryce took her, the plug in her ass burning as another orgasm screeched through her. Completely, totally, and utterly spent, Mikayla finally collapsed onto the mattress, her bones seemingly dissolved. Bryce pulled gently from her pussy, disappearing for a few moments into the bathroom. He came back with a warm washcloth, removed the plug from her ass, and cleaned her gently.

Once he was finished, Ryan and Ty rolled her onto her back and removed the clamps, each laving a burning nipple as the blood flow returned. She moaned as Bryce did the same for her clit, his warm tongue bathing her swollen flesh lovingly.

She let them move her wherever they wanted, unable to find her voice even to consider a protest. Finally, Bryce curled around her, holding her back to his warm chest as Ryan and Ty kissed her sweetly and turned to leave the room.

She was asleep before they closed the door.

* * * *

Bryce woke suddenly. He was shaking and drenched in sweat, the lingering effects of his nightmare pounding adrenaline through his heart.

Mikayla lay in his arms, holding him tight, making quiet soothing noises as he finally managed to separate dream from reality. He ran an unsteady hand down his face, embarrassed to be so affected by a dream. But his wife knew him well. She slid higher up the bed, dropping kisses on his neck, his jaw before she finally claimed his lips.

She kissed him aggressively, thrusting her tongue into his mouth again and again as he groaned and ran his hands over every inch of skin he could reach. She urged him onto his back, straddled his waist, and took his aching cock into her slick pussy. She rode him hard and fast as he caressed her hips, her thighs, her ass. She squeezed her internal muscles and gripped him harder, much harder.

Bryce panted, trying to hold back his orgasm. Mikayla changed the rhythm. Lifting and falling onto his cock over and over until his eyes nearly rolled into the back of his head. Blindly, he sought her clit with his fingers, pressing and rolling the little bud as soon as he found it.

Mikayla gasped, her internal muscles fluttering around his cock a moment before her orgasm burst through her. Her pussy pulsed, massaging his erection as his own climax took him.

She fell forward onto his chest and sighed, sounding completely relaxed. Bryce closed his eyes, amazed at how at peace he felt despite the lingering memory of the dream that had woken him. The nightmare was usually the same each time—basically a replay of what happened in the hospital on Earth when Matt was shot and Mikayla faced an assassin's gun. But of course, in his dream, Bryce didn't get there on time, and they both died in his arms.

But tonight's nightmare was a little different. The setting had changed, but the outcome remained the same.

“I don’t want you to come to the hospital,” he said before he could modify his words.

“I know,” Mikayla whispered.

They lay there quietly for a few more moments before Bryce realized how uncomfortable Mikayla must be pressed against his sweat-slicked chest.

“Come on, honey. Let’s get cleaned up.”

She nodded, her face slipping against his sweaty skin, and he simply could not have adored her more at that moment. She loved him, with all his faults, all his doubts, all his questionable decisions and murky history. Even when they’d met, when everyone believed him to be a criminal, when his own twin believed him to be a cold-hearted killer, Mikayla had seen something no one else had noticed.

He knew he couldn’t live without her, which was why he didn’t want her at the hospital when he had his leg fixed. It was probably total paranoia, but he wouldn’t risk the woman he loved. If that meant convincing her to stay here while he had surgery, then that’s what he would do.

But convincing Mikayla to stay away when one of her husbands was injured? That was a battle he wasn’t sure he could win. Maybe he needed to call in reinforcements.

Chapter Five

Three days later, Mikayla had a pretty good idea that Bryce didn't want her beside him at the hospital. Not only had Matt, Brock, and Lachlan all taken turns to stress how much faster Bryce would heal if he didn't have to worry about putting his wife in danger, but Tracey and one of her husbands had just arrived. Rick had apparently been hired to take over Bryce's security duties while he was out of action. No doubt her husbands figured Tracey would be a welcome distraction for Mikayla as well.

"You look tired," Tracey said by way of greeting.

Mikayla smiled, happy to see her best friend after weeks of life at the research station with only her husbands. She loved them all dearly, but sometimes a woman just needed some girl talk.

"I'm fine," Mikayla said. "Just had a couple of rough nights."

"Bryce?"

"Yes," she said with a nod, "the closer his surgery gets, the worse his nightmares are."

"Maybe you should think about doing what he asks and stay on the station while he's in hospital."

Mikayla smiled at the irony of the situation. "I've already told him I'd stay here." Tracey looked so confused that Mikayla gave her a wry grin as she explained. "I think I gave in too quickly. So now he thinks I'm planning to do something once he's unable to stop me."

Tracey giggled, and Mikayla felt herself relax for the first time in days. It really was a ridiculous situation. She'd slept in Bryce's arms the last several nights, listened to his nocturnal mumblings, and soothed his fear when he woke. There was no way she'd add to his

worries by going against his wishes in this matter. But it would seem that none of her husbands believed her.

“I guess that’s what you get for being sneaky.”

Mikayla rolled her eyes at Tracey’s easy summation. The woman was right, but it didn’t mean Mikayla had to agree out loud. Dealing with eight bossy, overprotective husbands wasn’t an easy task if she wanted to retain some sort of control over her own life. A certain amount of sneakiness was a necessary evil.

“I suspect that Brock will want to ‘play’ soon. Bryce and Lachlan should leave for the hospital in about two hours, and by then I will be conveniently exhausted.”

“I suspect you’re right,” Tracey agreed with a wide grin and then tilted her head toward the doorway where Brock stood with his arms crossed.

* * * *

Brock felt a weight lift from his heart when he heard Mikayla laugh with Tracey. It was so easy to forget sometimes that their wife needed contact with other people, not just her husbands. He’d talk to his brothers about making sure Mikayla had more regular contact with other people.

But first he had a determined sub to distract.

“Mikayla,” he said in the voice he used to signal the beginning of their Dom-sub play.

“Yellow,” she said immediately as she held up a hand for him to stop.

Hell, maybe Bryce had been right. But whatever Mikayla was planning could lead her into serious danger and make it more difficult for Bryce to relax and heal after his surgery.

“Fine,” Brock said, trying not to grind his teeth. “Sixty seconds.”

“Orange?” she asked with a smart-ass grin. He raised an eyebrow, waiting for her explanation. “Brock, not now. Maybe later.”

“Now sub,” he said, not caring that Tracey watched the entire exchange obviously trying not to giggle.

“No, Brock,” Mikayla said, her anger suddenly very clear in her voice. “I want to say goodbye to Bryce and Lachlan without being strapped down to a spanking bench. We can play later.”

“Baby girl,” he said as he stepped into the room. Obviously, their wife knew her men better than they knew themselves. “Bryce wants you to be safe. Whatever you are planning, you need to rethink it.”

“Oh for fuck’s sake,” she practically growled. His wife sounded supremely annoyed. “For the thousandth time, I am not planning anything. Bryce wants me safe. I want Bryce to heal without worrying about me. I’m staying here. End. Of. Story.”

It was probably ridiculous in the face of his wife’s ire, but Brock really wanted to celebrate. This was the real Mikayla. The woman who not only loved them wholeheartedly but wasn’t afraid to tell them to go to hell when she felt it necessary.

“Okay, baby girl,” he said as he walked into the room and wrapped his arms around her. “We’ll play later, but Bryce would be much happier if you were strapped to the spanking bench when he left.”

He didn’t even need to see her face to know she rolled her eyes at his suggestion. “Fine. Okay. Whatever it takes to make him realize I will be waiting here for him to come home.” She reached up and nipped at Lachlan’s jaw. “But I expect you to make it worth my while.”

He laughed as he hugged her closer. “Okay, baby girl, they leave in two hours. I’ll expect you in my quarters in one hour and forty-five minutes. Do we have a deal?”

“Yes, Sir,” she said with another smart-ass grin. God, he loved it when she sassed him. He left the room as interesting ideas on how to punish his sub filled his head.

* * * *

She found Bryce sitting on the edge of the pool. It was obvious his mind was elsewhere as he stared into the crystal clear water, but she smiled sympathetically at the concerned look that crossed his face. Obviously, he expected her to be busy with Brock by now.

“I just wanted to wish you a speedy recovery.” He glanced around the area as if he might need his brothers’ help to talk her out of whatever he thought she planned on doing. “Relax,” she said, feeling completely exasperated. Some days eight husbands were about nine too many. “I will be here waiting for you to come home to me.” He didn’t look convinced, and for a moment, she wanted to scream at him for being so damned cantankerous.

But then she saw the worry in his eyes and remembered the mumbled words of his nightmare last night, and the rage drained right out of her. She lowered herself to the ground beside him and wrapped her arms around his middle.

“I promise you that I won’t leave the research station—not until you’re well enough to escort me—and you have to promise me that you’ll spend your energy getting better, not worrying about me.”

“Honey, I’ll always worry about you.” He would, too. Considering that he’d spent ten years of his life working undercover and had willingly cut ties to his brothers in an effort to protect them, it was a good bet he’d go to extremes to protect her also.

“Okay,” she said, pretending to think about it. “I’ll make you a deal. You can worry all you like as long as you take the painkillers the doctor prescribes.” She knew he hated not being in control—he and Matt had that in common—but he’d heal faster if he wasn’t in pain.

“Okay,” he said, sounding like she’d just asked him to cut off his favorite limb.

“Good, now that we have that out of the way,” Mikayla said, glancing around as if she was about to share a well hidden secret. “Want to have some fun?”

She straddled his lap, grabbed his head in her hands, and kissed him like he was going to be away for months, not overnight like the doctor predicted. “Oh, but we have to be quick,” she said, glancing at the chronometer on the wall. “I promised Brock that I would be tied to a spanking chair before you and Lachlan leave.”

She smiled. Bryce’s relaxed laugh was well worth the sore ass she’d have in the morning.

* * * *

Lachlan might have looked relaxed, but he was well aware of everything that was going on around him. Bryce had just been brought to his room after a successful surgery that should give him back full use of his leg. He was still coming out of the anesthesia, but of course the first word on his lips had been “Mikayla.” Lachlan didn’t doubt for a second that she would be the first thought in his head also.

Lachlan had reassured his sleepy brother and now stood guard as he rested. It was probably overkill on this planet. They used the same laws and judicial system as Earth, and the police force was quite well funded, but if Lachlan had learned anything in the last ten years, it was never to let his guard down. Awful things happened to people who weren’t prepared.

The conversation he’d had with Bryce on the trip into town had proven just how similar they were in both personality *and* personal experience. Lachlan had also noticed that polygamy on this planet seemed restricted to men having multiple wives. There simply weren’t any women with more than one husband. Add it to the fact that they hadn’t seen any same sex couples, and it was a fairly safe bet that there were other influences at work than just the law. Polygamy was legal for both sexes, but that didn’t seem to be the case in practice.

It certainly suggested they should keep a low profile on this planet. He really didn't look forward to explaining that to Mikayla.

A raised voice and a pain-filled grunt in the corridor drew his attention, and he moved to the doorway to see what was happening. Not more than five paces away, a woman struggled to get back onto her feet. Blood poured from her mouth, and she shook violently as she tried to rise.

But it was the man standing over her that caused Lachlan's anger to flare white-hot. The guy was twice the woman's height and outweighed her by at least a hundred pounds, yet he yelled at her until she managed to get up, and then he swung at her again.

Lachlan reacted, unable to stand by and watch such abuse. He caught the man's arm mid-swing and held tight. Surprised by the sudden interruption, the man turned to glare at Lachlan.

"Stay out of this," he growled as he tried to shake his arm free. "I can punish my wife any way I see fit."

"There is a difference between punishment and abuse," Lachlan said, still trying to control the urge to punch this lowlife in the face. The woman managed to stay upright even though she wobbled on unsteady legs. Lachlan wanted her to run for help, but if anything, she seemed more frightened now that he'd gotten involved.

"Zedahla," the man said to the injured woman in an angry voice, "explain to this Earthling"—the term was said in a derogatory manner despite the fact both the man and his wife were obviously human—"why you are being punished."

"I disobeyed my husband." Lachlan had seen many abusive relationships in his time as a Dom. Some women truly enjoyed the degradation and so-called punishment their partners dished out, but most were simply being abused under the guise of a Dom-sub relationship.

But it was a minefield to negotiate. If the woman willingly accepted her husband's abuse, there really was no way for Lachlan to

help her. He tried one last time. Still holding on to her husband's arm, Lachlan stepped in front of the woman and said, "Look at me."

She glanced nervously in her husband's direction then raised her gaze to Lachlan's.

"Do you need assistance?" Again the woman glanced at her husband. "Don't look at him. Look at me. Do you need assistance?"

"N-No," she managed to force past her swollen lips.

Lachlan nodded once. "Then I apologize for interfering." The words were raw in his throat. He didn't like walking away, yet if she refused his help, he could do nothing else. But as Lachlan turned his back, he knew if her husband hit her again that he wouldn't be able to control his reaction.

Too bad her husband was a stupid man.

It took a single punch for the man to hit the ground with a solid thump. Lachlan stepped over the unconscious asshole and lifted the severely injured woman into his arms. This time her husband had hit her hard enough to break several of her teeth. One of her eyes was already swollen shut, and she moaned in pain as Lachlan tried not to jostle her ribs. By the time Lachlan got help for her at the emergency department of the hospital, the local police had arrived.

So much for keeping a low profile.

* * * *

Bryce woke to far less pain than he expected. In fact, now that the pain was lessened, he realized just how much he'd been living with on a daily basis. Hell, at this rate he'd be back to work in a few days.

"How do you feel?" a soft feminine voice asked. Bryce grinned. Last time he'd woken to a beautiful nurse, he'd spent the next three days flirting. Of course, that was before he'd met Mikayla, and well, it had ended with bullets flying and the woman screaming, so it probably wasn't something he needed to think about right now.

"I feel great," he answered.

“Excellent,” the pretty nurse said with a husky voice and a seductive smile. “The doctor will be in soon. Just press the buzzer if you need anything.”

Bryce watched the nurse walk out the door and wondered if she walked like that all the time or if the extra sway was for his benefit. Maybe he shouldn’t have listed himself as single, but with his concern over the polygamy issue, it had seemed like a good idea at the time.

“Finished?” Lachlan asked with a laugh in his voice. Lachlan gave him a knowing smile, but Bryce just grinned like a loon. It felt so good to finally be out of pain that he didn’t really give a rat’s ass what his brother was thinking.

But then Lachlan’s expression turned serious, and Bryce felt dread pour into his veins.

“What happened? Is Mikayla all right?”

“Yes,” Lachlan was quick to reassure, “but *I* might not be when she finds out what happened.”

“What happened?” Bryce had no clue what his brother might be talking about. He knew with absolute certainty that Lachlan would never hurt Mikayla, so he had no idea what he might have done to warrant such a reaction. Even after he started to explain, Bryce knew Mikayla wouldn’t be angry with Lachlan for stepping in when a woman needed his protection. It wasn’t until he got to the last sentence of his story that Bryce understood. But hell, what choice did they have?

“Maybe you should call Mikayla and explain this before we get home.” Lachlan nodded but seemed reluctant to make the call. “What is it?”

“She’s only just started acting like herself again. I’m just worried this will affect her on a deeper level than it should.”

Bryce nodded. Convincing Mikayla that she was irreplaceable had taken extreme measures. Bringing home another woman may just undo everything they’d achieved in the last few weeks. Bryce closed

his eyes and silently prayed the woman they loved was strong enough to understand their reasons why.

* * * *

Mikayla waited anxiously for Bryce and Lachlan to arrive. She knew they had an extra passenger, but every time doubts began to niggle in her mind, she thrust them aside ruthlessly. Her husbands were good men. She couldn't expect Lachlan to walk away from a woman in need of his protection when he was only doing what Matt had done when he'd rescued her on the ice planet.

But her first glimpse of the woman, Zedahla, put every fear out of Mikayla's head. The girl was barely old enough to be married—legally at least—and she was so badly bruised she looked like she'd been run over by a flying pod with no safeties.

Mikayla watched Lachlan offer to carry her, but Zedahla seemed to insist on walking. A few stumbled steps had Mikayla's breath catching in fear for the young woman's health. Hell, the bruises were horrendous, but she also had an unhealthy pallor and looked painfully thin.

"It's okay," Mikayla said as she stepped closer. "Let Lachlan carry you." Zedahla didn't make eye contact, but it was obvious she was listening. "I've set up a room so all you have to do is lie down and recover. We'll take care of the rest."

This time when Lachlan offered, the young woman let him lift her in his arms. Bryce stepped out of the transport pod with his crutches, and for a moment, Mikayla was carried back to the day she'd had her first miscarriage. Bryce must've been in severe pain, but he'd stayed by her side and she'd never felt alone. Back then he'd officially been her brother-in-law and a virtual stranger, but just knowing she had someone close who cared had made all the difference. Hopefully, Zedahla would feel the same.

* * * *

Mikayla didn't notice Bryce transfer his crutches into one hand until he wrapped an arm around her middle and pulled her close. "Not exactly the homecoming we were expecting." He kissed her neck and then simply held her as they watched Lachlan move to the main building. Mikayla had managed to convert one of the offices into a bedroom. Peter had willingly handed over the small space, and it was a relief to be able to offer a certain amount of privacy to Zedahla.

"No, I'm pretty sure bringing home an injured woman wasn't in the original plan." Mikayla felt Bryce stiffen slightly and quickly added the rest. "But you did the right thing. And you don't need to worry about me. I understand why she's here."

"Careful, honey," Bryce said with a smile on his face. "Keep talking like that and we might start believing you finally understand that you're irreplaceable."

She giggled but held him tighter.

"That's very true," she said, trying to keep a straight face. "I am very good at...cooking."

He laughed like she'd hoped he would. "Whose bed did you sleep in last night?" he asked as he nibbled on her earlobe.

"Well, that was rather interesting," she said as she tried to find words to explain her husbands' bizarre behavior. "Technically, I slept in Brock's bed, but Matt, John, Peter, Ryan, and Ty all managed to be there at some point or other. It was like they spent the night playing musical beds." She had a pretty good idea what had prompted their strange behavior, and it warmed her heart at the same time that it pissed her off. She wasn't a timid mouse by nature, but she'd spent so much time acting like one recently that her husbands' behavior was probably warranted.

"So that must mean we're back to my turn," Bryce said with a wicked smile on his face.

“Absolutely,” Mikayla said with a laugh. She’d had every intention of sleeping next to Bryce tonight. “But you may find Lachlan on the other side.” No doubt he’d feel the need to reassure her as well.

“Too true,” Bryce said, sounding more relaxed than he had in a long while. “As long as he doesn’t snore, he can stay.”

“No worries,” Mikayla said with a smile. “I doubt I’ll hear his snoring over yours.”

“Brat.” Bryce laughed as he pulled her closer.

Chapter Six

“Where is Zedahla now?” Rick asked as the dinner discussion turned to their new house guest.

“Sleeping,” Lachlan said in a rough voice. Now that the swelling was starting to go down, it was obvious that Zedahla was barely more than a child. If she was actually old enough to be married, it was only by a handful of weeks at the most.

“Has she said anything about her husband?”

“Only that he will probably divorce her. Apparently, in Zedahla’s culture, that will make her an outcast. As far as I can tell, she was at the hospital to visit her mother, but with the supposed shame of divorce, even her own parents will reject her.”

All day Lachlan had replayed the horrifying scene over and over in his head. If he’d stayed out of it, would the outcome have been different? Did he make matters worse by interfering? But then he’d close his eyes and see the young woman as he’d first seen her—injured, bleeding, and struggling to stand as her husband yelled abuse and then tried to hit her again—and all Lachlan’s doubts would melt away. Outcast or not, Zedahla’s chances of a happy life were far improved now.

“What happens when we leave this planet?” Ryan asked.

“We take her with us,” Mikayla said easily. Far from being upset, their beautiful wife had been appalled by the young woman’s injuries and had quickly become fiercely protective.

“We’ll figure it out when the time comes,” Lachlan said quietly. Like it or not—and regardless of the accepted norms of her culture—the laws on this planet allowed for Zedahla to make her own

decisions. If she chose to stay here and live the life of an outcast, Mikayla, Lachlan, and the rest of his brothers really had no say in the matter.

“What happened with the police?” Brock asked.

“They held off charging me with assault, for the moment at least. They’ve been surprisingly supportive, but they need Zedahla to press charges against her husband before they can attribute my actions to defending her.” He shook his head as the information the police had shared once again made him feel sick to the stomach. “Apparently, domestic violence is a big problem in the community where Zedahla was raised, but the women simply won’t report it.” It was obvious to Lachlan by Zedahla’s refusal to ask for assistance at the hospital that the women were conditioned to believe their husbands had a right to treat them the way they did.

It was possible that many lived happy and fulfilling lives under such conditions, but just like Dom-sub relationships, a weak or selfish man could take that power and turn it into something cruel and dangerous.

“So what happens now?” Ryan asked.

“For now I think we need to concentrate on getting our contract completed. We still have several months of geological surveys to work on, but I’d like to get this one done faster if we can.”

Everyone nodded in agreement.

* * * *

It was less than a day before the police arrived to formally charge Lachlan with assault. Fortunately, Zedahla was brave enough to give her side of the story, and the charges were summarily dropped.

Their next visitor, however, didn’t bring such happy news.

The pompous, rounded, arrogant little man arrived without warning, demanded to speak with Zedahla, and then did the one thing guaranteed to anger all of them—disrespected Mikayla.

“Lower your eyes, woman,” he said with arrogant disdain as he looked her over from head to toe. Matt and Bryce looked as angry as Lachlan felt, but Mikayla managed to take control of the situation with a smirk.

“Sweeten your tone, asshole,” she said in a very controlled voice. The little man looked shocked all the way to the tips of his dusty boots. Obviously, a woman had never spoken back to him before. Mikayla took two steps closer. She was about the same height as their visitor, and Lachlan tensed, wishing Mikayla could’ve conveyed her irritation without getting close enough for the man to hit her. “You are in my home, and if you wish to speak to Zedahla, it will be under my terms. Got that?”

The man simply didn’t know where to look. His gaze bounced around all the men in the room, but when none of them came to his rescue, he finally nodded his agreement.

“Good,” Mikayla said, pointing at the chair just inside the door of John’s office. “Take a seat.” The man sat before any of the brothers needed to move. If the situation hadn’t been so serious, it might’ve been half funny. Obviously, the arrogant, little man had no experience dealing with women like Mikayla, and he had no clue what to do next.

That, however, didn’t stop Lachlan, Bryce, and Matt from standing guard over the man while Mikayla went to speak to Zedahla.

* * * *

“Zedahla?” Mikayla whispered just in case the woman was asleep.

“Yes, Mikayla, please come in.” Zedahla was sitting up in the bed. Her face was purple and bruised and slightly swollen, and she was unable to open her left eye fully. The cuts and splits on her lips would probably heal in a week or so, but it was the emotional recovery that would take time.

“Zedahla, there’s a man here to see you. He says he’s your...Po...Potentate?”

Tears filled the young woman's eyes, and she nodded. "He is the leader of our religious community." She looked at Mikayla with such hope in her eyes that Mikayla wasn't sure what to say next. Judging by the man's attitude, whatever news he had to deliver wouldn't be good.

"Would you like to talk to him? I can tell him to go away if you're not up to it."

Zedahla shook her head. "No, I would like to speak to him. He is not only our religious leader, he is also my grandfather."

"Oh," Mikayla said because she couldn't think of anything else to say. Zedahla was already covered neck to knee, but she reached for her coat and managed to pull it on despite having two cracked ribs.

"Can you stay with me while I speak to him?"

"Of course," Mikayla said quickly. She'd had every intention of staying close, but at least this way, Zedahla wouldn't be offended if she caught Mikayla eavesdropping.

As soon as she saw her grandfather, Zedahla dropped her gaze to the floor and painfully lowered herself to kneel at the man's feet. Mikayla was torn between anger and understanding. She often knelt at Brock and Lachlan's feet, but she did it by choice as their submissive. She suspected that Zedahla's motives weren't the same.

A genuine smile of affection graced the man's face for a brief moment before he adjusted his features and began talking in a loud and officious voice.

"Zedahla, your husband has requested a divorce. He has laid formal complaint at your father's door, and your father has granted his petition. You are hereby outcast."

Unable to keep quiet, Mikayla asked, "What does that mean exactly?" Being outcast from a family that would sanction Zedahla's husband's behavior wasn't really a bad thing as far as Mikayla was concerned, but it was the old man's attitude that worried her.

Again the man looked startled that she addressed him directly, but he must've sensed the growing agitation in Mikayla's husbands because he finally answered her.

"It means she has no protection. If you hadn't interfered, she'd still be safe."

"Safe?" Brock asked in his deceptively low Dom's voice.

"Yes, without her family to protect her, she will be used by any man who desires to do so."

"You mean she'll be raped," Lachlan said, holding his jaw tight enough to crack teeth.

"That's exactly what I mean," the man said angrily. "You did this to her. You should not have interfered in a culture you don't understand."

"Look at her," Mikayla demanded angrily. "Look at the damage her husband did to her face, to her ribs. If Lachlan hadn't stepped in your granddaughter would be dead."

The older man nodded in agreement and then said quietly, "She would've been better off."

Lachlan escorted the man to the door, and Mikayla followed, more than willing to kick this asshole to the curb where he belonged. But out of earshot of the others, Zedahla's grandfather turned to Lachlan and whispered urgently, "Please protect her. I begged her father not to do this, but as Potentate, I must enforce the laws of my people."

Lachlan nodded just once.

* * * *

Several hours later Lachlan wandered into the kitchen a little too early for dinner. They planned to work double-time so that they could get this contract finished and get off the planet, but he needed food and, thanks to a sleepless night at the hospital, was already overdue for some rest. He had visions of taking a nap while holding his wife

close. Of course it would be much easier to sleep if they made sure they were both thoroughly exhausted first.

The sound of Mikayla and Matt laughing together was very welcome even if it did derail his more lascivious plans.

“That is a very sweet sound,” he said as he stepped into the kitchen.

“Well hello, stranger,” Mikayla said as she moved into his embrace and hugged him hard. Matt glanced in his direction, said, “Hi, Lachlan,” in a happy voice, and went back to cooking.

“What’s for dinner?” he asked when he couldn’t quite identify the delicious aroma.

“Sautéed krelp...ah...what did you call it, Mikayla?”

“Bubble-snake,” she answered with a broad grin.

“Sautéed bubble-snake with green vegetables and pichula grain.”

Lachlan suddenly found his appetite waning. He knew what pichula grain tasted like. It was similar to brown rice from Earth, and he’d enjoyed many of the vegetables grown on this planet. But the idea of eating snake—especially one that looked like something someone had coughed up—didn’t appeal to him at all.

Mikayla was obviously reading every expression that crossed his face because she laughed and hugged him harder.

“The market seller assured Matt that it tastes very much like chicken.”

He’d heard that one before.

Suddenly, working through dinner didn’t seem like a bad plan. But Mikayla looked at him with such amusement on her face that he found himself agreeing to be waiting eagerly at the dining table in a half hour.

He held Mikayla close for a moment longer as he mentally went over the things they would have to do to finish this contract early.

The sound of the proximity alarm was very unwelcome.

Lachlan moved to the intercom. “Bryce?” he asked quickly.

“A sky pod with three human occupants is heading this way. It doesn’t seem to be hostile, but I sure as hell don’t like unexpected visitors.”

Lachlan agreed. Their last official visitor had been Zedahla’s grandfather, and they didn’t need any more announcements like that one, but it was the flybys that were most worrying. Several times in the past few hours, sky pods filled with young men had buzzed the building. Fortunately, none of them had yet been brave enough to land, but it meant that Lachlan and Bryce were once again armed and ready inside their own home.

“Stay with Matt,” Lachlan said as he released his wife. She nodded reassuringly, and he turned toward the front entrance.

* * * *

Bryce practically ran the length of the hallway. He was pretty sure this wasn’t what the doctor had in mind when he told him to take it easy for a few days.

“Talk to me,” Lachlan said as he joined him.

“This one landed. Whoever they are, they fully intend to get inside.”

Together they watched the surveillance feed for the front door. Adrenaline buzzed through Bryce, the type of fight-or-flight response that had kept him alive for years, and he welcomed the clarity it gave him.

Falling into the silent teamwork they’d built over the last year, Bryce and Lachlan each took control of a camera and followed the pod as it landed inside the compound base. The first person to leave the small craft was a man dressed in very ordinary clothes. He looked older than the youths who’d been circling the compound previously, but that probably made him more dangerous, not less. It was the woman who followed him out that took them by surprise.

The third person stayed inside the pod. Every hair on the back of Bryce's neck prickled with tension as they watched the man and woman step up to the front door. "State your business," Bryce said in an aggressive voice through the intercom. The woman jumped back, but the man quickly pulled her into his arms and seemed to speak to her in a quiet voice. Too quiet, unfortunately, for the audio receiver to pick up.

The man's behavior certainly didn't match what they'd seen of other people on this planet—especially the ones who came from the same religious community as Zedahla.

The man spoke both clearly and confidently. "I am Danki Kylan Halosweeta. This is my wife, Zecarla. She would like to visit with her sister."

Bryce felt every instinct he owned flip on to red alert. Something wasn't right with this picture. A woman visiting her sister shouldn't look so damn frightened. It was possible that she feared the reaction from Bryce and his brothers. But if she thought her sister was here, and being protected by them, wouldn't she feel more comfortable?

Lachlan gave Bryce a look that confirmed he was thinking the same thing.

"Zedahla is not here right now. Can I take a message?"

The look of relief on the woman's face only confirmed that something sinister was in the works.

"My wife and I shall return when she is available," the man said in quite an agreeable tone. "Or perhaps we could visit her wherever she is now. Where is she?"

"Off planet," Bryce said, signaling for Lachlan to head to Zedahla's quarters and make sure the young woman was protected. Despite the reasonable tone it was obvious this man was fishing for information.

Bryce's suspicions were confirmed a moment later when an older man stepped from the pod and joined the couple on the doorstep.

“Hand over my daughter immediately,” the man said angrily. “She is not off planet. She is inside cowering behind strangers.”

“She is no longer your daughter,” Bryce said, letting all of his aggression and anger leak into his voice. “You forfeited that claim when you had her made an outcast.”

“I did no such thing,” Zedahla’s father said. The smirk on his face said otherwise, but his next words filled Bryce with rage. “You are holding a minor against her parents’ wishes. If you do not hand her over immediately, I will be forced to involve the local police.” The arrogant asshole grinned like he’d somehow won the argument and then stood there with his arms crossed. Waiting.

“Zedahla is not here at the moment. Can I take a message?” The anger on the pathetic-excuse-for-a-father’s face was well worth the effort it had taken to say the words calmly.

Zedahla’s father huffed indignantly. “I had hoped to solve this misunderstanding in a civil manner, but be assured, Mr. Davidson, that I will return with the proper authorities.”

“Good luck with that,” Bryce said in a tone that he hoped conveyed his absolute disgust in this man. The younger couple turned toward the flying pod, and for one insane moment, Bryce wanted to open the door, snatch the woman from them, and protect her from these men as well. But if he’d learned one thing in his time as an undercover cop, it was that you couldn’t save everybody, no matter how hard you tried. At least Zedahla’s sister didn’t seem to be a victim of abuse—today.

Bryce monitored the flying pod’s retreat. As soon as he was sure they were gone, he headed to the communications room to confer with his brothers. Fortunately, they’d already come to the same conclusions.

“We heard what you heard,” Matt said as he pulled Mikayla closer. “Brock, Lachlan, and Rick are heading back to Earth with Mikayla, Tracey, and Zedahla. Rick has already spoken to a couple of his contacts. We should be able to convince a judge to sign

emancipation papers with Zedahla's testimony. With a bit of luck, we'll be able to keep her on Earth while the legal wheels turn."

"Good," Bryce said, feeling the first stirrings of relief in his gut. He hated that it was necessary to split up, but they had at least three months of work left on the contract before they were finished. Fortunately, most of Brock and Lachlan's survey work had been completed, and Peter knew enough to get the rest done.

It left Bryce alone to handle the security issues, but thanks to the mouse tears on the last planet, Ryan, Ty, Peter, John, and Matt were far more capable of defending themselves than they used to be.

Bryce glanced around the members of his family and realized how much he had to lose these days. As if she understood his concern, Mikayla chose that moment to move into his arms. He held her close, glad she'd talked him in to getting his leg fixed and more than relieved she would be safe on Earth with Lachlan and Brock.

"Damn," Ty said with a smile on his face. "Everyone who can cook worth a damn is leaving the planet. Now we *really* have an incentive to get this contract finished early."

Bryce found himself laughing with the rest of them.

Thank god he had a second chance to be part of his family.

Chapter Seven

Mikayla cuddled up to Lachlan as Brock piloted the cruiser. Tracey and Rick had retreated to the sleeping quarters, ostensibly to sleep, but it was more likely that Rick would use the time to reassure himself that Tracey was all right. Considering how much danger they kept finding themselves in, Rick and his brothers may very well decide that knowing and working with the Davidson family was simply too much of a risk to Tracey. Fortunately, like Mikayla, Tracey was more than capable of dealing with her overprotective partners.

Zedahla looked tense, but she hadn't voiced any objection to being removed from the planet of her birth.

"Zedahla," Mikayla said quietly to the girl who seemed to jump in fright at the sound of her name. "Do you know what happens to outcasts?"

She nodded carefully around her bruises, but it was the look in her eyes that made Mikayla realize just how frightened the young woman actually was. "My cousin was made an outcast when I was twelve," she said in a high-pitched, too-fast voice. "My father made me and my sister watch what the men did to her as a warning of what would happen if we disobeyed our husbands."

"Jesus," Lachlan said in a tone of absolute disgust. "We need to go back and get your sister."

Zedahla shook her head sadly. "She will not leave. She believes that what they did to our cousin was justified. Zacarla trusts in the teachings of our father's religion and would never disgrace her husband as I have done."

“Your father’s religion?” Mikayla asked quietly. They’d talked quite a bit in the last few hours, but this was one subject they’d both studiously avoided. “So you don’t share his beliefs.”

“It’s a little hard to have faith in a religion that condones the killing of a young girl simply on her husband’s say so.”

“Killing?” Mikayla asked through a suddenly tight throat. Knowing that outcasts were systematically raped by the men of their community was horrifying enough, but murder was something she hadn’t considered. “How do they get away with it?”

Zedahla shrugged. Lachlan held Mikayla closer as he provided a possible answer. “Either they don’t report the woman missing or they claim that she ran away with an off-worlder.” Zedahla shrugged again, clearly not sure how her father and his friends managed to hide their activities from legal intervention.

“Holy fuck,” Mikayla whispered as the real reason for her father wanting Zedahla back began to sink in. “You’re a witness to murder.”

Zedahla nodded slowly and then tilted her head in question.

“You have the power to report the men who killed your cousin,” Lachlan said. “The laws on your planet are the same as they are on Earth. If police could find enough evidence, your father would spend a very long time in prison.”

“Oh,” Zedahla said, seeming overwhelmed by the information. “I’ll...um...I’ll try, but I don’t know the name of any of the men other than my father.”

“What about their faces?”

Zedahla shuddered as she nodded. “What if it doesn’t work? What if I tell the police everything, and they still get away with it?”

“It’s okay, Zedahla,” Lachlan reassured her in a steady voice. “We will be able to protect you on Earth. You’ll like my parents.” She looked relieved to hear that again, even though Mikayla’s husbands had been saying it since they’d contacted their parents and explained the situation. Mikayla’s in-laws were quite happy to take in a young refugee from another planet. But it was obvious that Zedahla’s

upbringing had left her with a lot of trust issues. “At the very least this information will make it easier to get an emancipation order. We’ll worry about the rest when we need to.”

“We’ve got a long trip ahead of us.” Mikayla checked the chronometer. “At least another seventeen hours. Why don’t you try and get some sleep?”

Zedahla glanced at the door leading to the sleeping quarters but chose to adjust her chair and sleep in the main cabin area. Considering what Tracey and Rick were probably up to it seemed a wise choice.

* * * *

Getting the emancipation order ended up a far simpler task than Brock had suspected. It appeared that the female judge knew of the behavior of some of the more extreme religious members like Zedahla’s father because she granted a temporary order to remain in force until a court date could be set for the hearing. Considering that Zedahla would probably be eighteen by the time the matter made it to a formal hearing, it was a fairly safe assumption that none of it would be necessary. It was the judge’s next question that took them by surprise.

“Zedahla, have you been a witness to any murders?”

Zedahla swallowed nervously. “Y–Yes,” Zedahla answered with her head lowered as if she were the one in trouble.

“Who?”

“My c–cousin.”

“Would you be willing to testify against the people involved?” Zedahla glanced at Mikayla for reassurance before nodding her head in answer.

“I need you to answer out loud, Zedahla,” the judge said in a kind voice. “Would you be willing to testify against the people involved?”

“Yes,” Zedahla answered in a loud but nervous voice.

“Thank you, Zedahla,” the judge said with a smile on her face. “You are a brave young lady. Please contact Officer Darkeen Leroy Haloden to make a formal statement.” A court employee handed Zedahla a business card and then she was free to go—now legally out of her family’s reach.

* * * *

Mikayla held her breath practically the whole time Zedahla spoke to Officer Haloden. It was obvious that he practiced the same religion as Zedahla’s father, and it had put Brock and Lachlan on edge. Thank goodness Rick and Tracey had stayed at the hotel because Mikayla was fairly certain that Rick would be standing with his arms crossed glaring at the man as well, fellow officer or not. Darkeen Leroy Haloden was simply too similar to the men on Zedahla’s home planet to make any of them comfortable.

Fortunately, despite her husbands’ intimidating presence, the man had been nothing but kind, and Zedahla had loosened the death grip on her chair. The details of her cousin’s murder were very difficult to listen to, and by the time she was done, Mikayla was ready to hide the girl away and never let anyone close again.

“Do you know why she was made an outcast?”

Zedahla shook her head but whispered, “Only that she didn’t do what her husband told her to do. I don’t know what that was.”

Once the formal complaint was taped and filed and the recorders finally turned off, Officer Haloden rolled his chair a little closer and said in a deep, quiet voice, “You are a very brave girl, Zedahla. Please know that your father does not represent our religion. He is part of a fanatical group who have twisted the teachings of the First Potentate to suit themselves. We will do everything we can to stop this sort of thing from happening again.”

He seemed to want to say more, but he glanced at Brock and Lachlan, nodded slightly, and left the interview room. Lachlan

followed him out of the room, but Mikayla had no time to wonder why because Zedahla started to shake as reaction set in and tears flowed down her face.

* * * *

Lachlan took a minute to size up the man. It was obvious to him and Brock that Officer Haloden was a trained Dominant. Whether that was part of his religion or simply a kink they had in common, Lachlan didn't know.

"Thank you, Mr. Davidson, for bringing Zedahla in to report this," he said as he held his hand out for Lachlan to shake.

"What happens now?" Lachlan asked as he shook the man's hand.

"Now we pass the information to the police force on planet M652wd and hope they can make arrests without causing a civil war."

"Seriously?" He hadn't even considered civil war. Lachlan knew that most of the people inhabiting the small colony shared the same religion, but he hadn't thought for a moment that Zedahla's testimony could very literally put many innocent people in danger.

His brothers included.

Hell, his brothers especially since Lachlan had started this course of action.

Suddenly, getting justice for Zedahla's cousin seemed a whole lot less important than keeping his family safe, Zedahla included.

"Zedahla's grandfather is the Potentate for her community. After he made Zedahla an outcast, he begged me to protect her. I don't know if he'll be able to help settle this peacefully, but it's worth a try."

"I will definitely try to contact him first," Officer Haloden said with a tense smile. "Thank you for rescuing Zedahla. Now that her testimony is on record, it would be a good idea for her to never return to our religion. Even on Earth we have a few fanatics in our ranks."

Enough said. Zedahla needed to disappear before the wheels of justice were set in motion.

“How long do we have?” Brock asked as his thoughts turned to his brothers still on the proposed mining colony.

“Less than a month,” Officer Haloden said with an uncertain shake of his head. “It will take time for the investigation to be completed, and we will want to try to locate more evidence to confirm Zedahla’s account of events. Unfortunately, from what she said, her sister is likely to refute Zedahla’s testimony, so we won’t get a conviction without some sort of physical evidence as well. We’ll try to find it without alerting any of the suspects to our actions, but they will likely learn of our investigation before we can lay formal charges.”

“So you’ll be traveling to planet M652wd personally.”

Officer Haloden nodded. “I’m hoping to go in undercover for a while before I alert the local authorities, but that could be hard to do with all the expense reports I’ll need to fill in.”

Lachlan usually trusted his instincts when it came to people. Officer Haloden seemed genuinely willing to risk his own safety to get justice for a woman he’d never known. Lachlan had already decided to return to M652wd to help finalize the contract quickly and get the station packed up, so he made the offer and hoped he was reading the man correctly.

“I’m traveling back to M652wd in two days. I’ve got room for a passenger.”

Officer Haloden nodded slowly, obviously working the logistics through his head. He could conduct a lot of his investigation from the anonymity of seeming to work for the Davidson brothers. Add Bryce’s undercover experience to the mix, and they might just have a chance of stopping Zedahla’s father from hurting anyone else.

“Excellent,” Officer Haloden said with a serious smile. “Just let me sort out a few things with my boss, and I’ll meet you the day after tomorrow.”

Lachlan watched the man walk away, hoping like hell that he was reading the man correctly. The last thing he needed was to invite a traitor into their midst.

* * * *

Later that night, Brock watched Mikayla and Tracey as they sat at the table playing some type of three dimensional game that required lots of giggles. It sounded so good to hear the women laughing that Brock could almost believe Lachlan's news that he was heading back to the planet wouldn't piss Mikayla off.

According to his parents, Zedahla had settled into the senior Davidson household with little fuss. Brock's mothers had both been appalled by the young woman's injuries, and already they seemed to have taken her under their motherly protection. Maybe Zedahla's presence would distract them for a little while from their campaign for grandchildren.

Eventually, the game came to an end, and Rick and Tracey excused themselves and headed to their bedroom. They'd decided to rent a suite of rooms so they could all have a little privacy while still being close enough to deal with any trouble that may have come their way. Fortunately, that seemed unlikely now that Zedahla was hidden away, so Tracey and Rick planned to head home to California in the morning.

Mikayla slipped into his embrace as Rick and Tracey wished them goodnight and left the main room. Brock held Mikayla close but nearly cursed a blue streak when she tilted her head back and demanded to know what was wrong.

Damn. Either he was slipping in his duties as a Dom, or his lovely wife was learning to read his moods too easily. Either way, it didn't bode well for the type of plans he and Lachlan had for their sub before they explained why Lachlan was leaving.

"What's wrong?" she demanded once more.

Without answering her, Brock leaned down, captured her lips with his own, and lifted her into his arms. He kissed her deeply as he carried her into the bedroom. By the time they broke apart to breathe, Mikayla was beautifully pliant in his arms and her eyelids had become heavy with desire. She stood still and allowed him to strip her clothes away before he buckled the cuffs to her wrists. She smiled sweetly as he hooked them behind her back and urged her to her knees.

“Are you comfortable, sub?”

“Yes, Sir,” she answered, already looking relaxed. It still amazed him how beautiful his woman could look when she willingly submitted to his domination. Mikayla was everything he could ever ask for in a wife, a lover, and a submissive, and his love for her grew every day.

Lachlan stood by the doorway, watching them as he lazily rubbed a hand over his hard cock. They had planned to test Mikayla on the proper use of her safe word but didn’t want to worry Tracey or Rick if they overheard them. Bondage could be easily misinterpreted, especially by a police officer who dealt with domestic violence on a daily basis.

“I love you, Mikayla,” Brock said as he touched her face gently.

“I love you, too, Brock. Now can I please suck your cock?”

Brock tried to hide his smile, but even Lachlan laughed at their sub’s naughtiness. He stepped into the room, lifted Mikayla into his arms, and arranged her face down over his lap. Brock grabbed the ball gag from Lachlan’s bag, and Mikayla willingly opened her mouth and let him fasten it in place. He smiled at her relieved sigh and suspected it was as much from the fact he hadn’t used the O-ring as it was her relief that she’d be able to stay quiet and not upset anyone in the neighboring room.

“Show me your safe signal,” Brock said in a tone that brooked no argument. Mikayla immediately closed and opened her hands three

times and left them open wide. “Thank you, baby girl. Are you comfortable?”

He could almost see her rolling her eyes even though she was faced away from him. This position wasn’t really meant to be comfortable—how comfortable could it be to lie face down over Lachlan’s hard thighs with her arms tied behind her back?—but it was important that they weren’t actually hurting her. She nodded.

Lachlan rubbed her bottom with his hand, warming it first before placing tiny little pinches against the skin. Mikayla squeaked at the first few, probably because the pinches were smaller, more localized stings than a spanking, but she soon began to squirm in Lachlan’s hold. Her juices quickly covered her labia and thighs, and she breathed heavily around the ball gag.

Brock moved closer, thrust two fingers deep into her pussy, and began to fuck her slowly. She tried to grind her clit against Lachlan’s thigh, but he held her just out of reach, and she growled in protest.

She was close. Brock could feel her orgasm building, so he pulled away. Even Lachlan stopped touching her, simply holding her still as she growled her discontent. When she finally settled, they began again, Lachlan giving her tiny, stinging pinches, Brock thrusting his fingers deep and hard into her pussy.

But as she got close again, they both pulled away.

Chapter Eight

Mikayla growled, but the damn ball gag lessened the sound and made her even more frustrated. She should be used to these two by now. Denying her orgasm had been a favorite game of theirs ever since she'd met them, but every time they did it, she wanted to smack them both. Well, she wanted to smack them right up until the point that they let her finally orgasm and the intensity of her long denied climax overwhelmed every other thought.

But right now, she lay quietly over Lachlan's lap, trying to calm down quickly so that they would start again. Every nerve ending tingled, her clit felt swollen and needy, her breasts heavy and aching, and heat snaked through her veins like a chemical fire. She had no choice but to breathe through it. Even without them touching her, the orgasm threatened to overwhelm her. But she knew what would happen if she came without their permission, so she held still and tried really, *really* hard to calm her frazzled nerves.

"Good girl," Brock said in approval. Heat melted through her a moment before a thumb pushed into her pussy and thick fingers found her clit. She panted against the intense sensations, her orgasm threatening, her muscles shaking with the effort to hold back.

"Come for us, little one," Lachlan said then bit her ass. She would've screamed, but the ball gag held her silent. Electricity leapt through her, searing every nerve, tightening every muscle, stealing every breath before blasting outward and shaking her entire body.

She shivered as overwhelming release washed through her and then moaned deeply as the rocking, rolling, melting sensation continued.

Finally, she lay limp over Lachlan's lap, panting around the ball gag, the ache in her shoulders and arms barely noticeable. She felt the wrist cuffs being unlocked and whimpered as Brock lifted her into the middle of the bed and helped her move her arms to a more natural position. Lachlan undid the ball gag, and she clenched and unclenched her jaw in an effort to ease the ache. They lay down on either side of her, soothing her with gentle strokes as her breathing finally returned to normal.

Lachlan kissed her, moving over her, pressing her hard against the bed as he thrust his cock against her swollen clit. The nerves zinged, sending heat rolling through her once more. She moaned as he teased her, his tongue thrusting into her mouth over and over but his cock just rubbing over her sensitized flesh.

He held her on the edge, easing away when she once again got close.

Brock rolled her onto her stomach, moved over her, and thrust his lubed cock against the crease of her ass. He rubbed between the cheeks, touching the sensitive pucker of her anus but never pushing inside. He licked and nibbled her neck and ear as he whispered what they planned to do. She shuddered in anticipation, even as he moved away and Lachlan lifted her to her hands and knees. He stood at the edge of the bed, tilted her chin up with his warm hand, and caressed her cheek tenderly.

"Suck me," Lachlan said as he pushed his hard cock against her mouth. She opened for him, licking the underside of his erection as he thrust hard. She swallowed around him, relaxing her throat and taking him deeper.

He held still while Brock pushed a thick dildo into her pussy and began to fuck her gently with the toy. She hummed against Lachlan's cock as Brock pushed the toy into her and secured it in place with elastic straps that connected to a Velcro belt around her waist. He smoothed a hand over the small welts on her ass before returning to the toy and turning it on.

“Do not come,” he said as she started to shake uncontrollably. Lachlan pulled away a moment, then thrust into her mouth, once, twice. He held still as Brock adjusted the front strap so that the imbedded beads rubbed against her swollen clit. She groaned as the shaking grew stronger, her release imminent.

“Do not come,” Brock said in a voice that promised dire punishment if she disobeyed.

She tried to relax, tried to hold back, tried to breathe through the sensation of lava flowing her veins and heating her pussy, but when Brock moved the straps from the crease of her ass and slid his hard cock into her back passage, she was lost.

Instantly, orgasm ripped through her, her ass, her pussy, her stomach all pulsing with her climax. Over and over heat swept through her, and her men began to fuck her in earnest. She gasped as Lachlan pressed deeper, fucking her harder as he swelled and exploded in her mouth. She swallowed, drinking him greedily as her ass tightened around Brock and he, too, lost control, finally pounding into her ass over and over and over until he hurled his seed deep into her back passage.

They collapsed on the bed, a sweaty, sticky mess, both of her men still inside her body as the vibrator continued to stimulate her pussy and the beads rubbed her clit. She moaned as the sensations kicked her into orgasm again, and then again, and then again.

Finally, her husbands pulled away, and one of them turned off the vibrator. She practically sobbed her relief as they undid the strap and carefully removed the beads from her swollen, aching clit. Lachlan rolled her onto her back and gently licked and suckled the sore flesh for a moment before rolling her onto her stomach and inspecting her red ass.

“Bath first,” he said as he carefully lifted her into his arms. “And then we’ll discuss your punishment.”

“Punishment?” she squawked indignantly. Surely leaving the vibrator on as long as they did was punishment enough. Every bone in her body seemed to have melted.

“You came without permission, baby girl. Four times, if I counted correctly.”

“That’s not fair,” she said, trying to muster the energy to argue.

“That’s what makes it so much fun,” Lachlan said as he kissed her softly.

She smiled at her husband’s knowing grin. Fun? Well, she couldn’t really argue with that.

* * * *

Bryce watched the monitor as three separate aircraft buzzed around the building. It would seem that none of them were aware that Zedahla had been removed from the planet more than two weeks ago, and for that he was thankful, but their behavior was getting more aggressive. Unfortunately, the local law couldn’t do anything until their high-flying visitors did something illegal. Until then the brothers were on their own.

The only bit of good news was that if the invaders did land, the laws on this planet were the same as they were on Earth. They were allowed to use deadly force to defend themselves from an intruder in their own home. Bryce carried both a stun weapon and his old-fashioned handgun at all times now. He didn’t want to kill anybody, but he sure as hell wouldn’t hesitate to defend himself or his brothers.

They had less than a month’s work before they could pack up and go back to Earth for a while. They’d already decided they could afford to take a year or two off, maybe longer if the brothers could find regular employment on Earth. After everything that had happened in the last three contracts, they figured they were quite entitled to a break.

Even Bryce was looking forward to going home. The house his brothers owned was already up for sale, and they'd made arrangements to park the research station in synchronous orbit until they decided how to put it to best use. Bryce would need to be careful, but the fact that they weren't returning to the same state would certainly help. They'd already discussed a number of different options but hadn't made any firm decisions.

Bryce watched the three flying pods scatter when a fourth, much larger craft came into view. Recognizing it as their own cruiser didn't help still his fear when he realized it contained two occupants. He alerted his brothers via the intercom and went to meet his unexpected visitors.

He was about to grill Lachlan for an explanation when the man behind him pulled his gun. Bryce reacted immediately, his weapon in his hand without any conscious thought.

"What the hell is going on?" the man asked Lachlan, never once lowering the gun he pointed at Bryce.

"Leroy," Lachlan said as he stepped between the two guns. "This is my brother Bryce."

"Yeah well your brother"—he spat the word—"is a well-known drug dealer."

"Interesting," Bryce drawled, deliberately keeping a mocking tone in his voice, "coming from a man like you." He barely recognized the guy, and if Leroy hadn't pulled a weapon on him, Bryce may have missed it. Stepping off his family's cruiser was the absolute last place he expected to find one of the drug runners he'd dealt with while working undercover.

"Damn it. Both of you lower your weapons while we sort this out." Bryce gave the other man a mocking grin as they both lowered their guns and pointed them at the ground. He might be willing to listen to Lachlan's explanation, but he wasn't stupid enough to put away his gun.

“Bryce, this is *Officer* Darkeen Leroy Haloden. Leroy, this is my brother Bryce Davidson. Bryce recently retired from ten years working undercover for the drug enforcement agency.” Lachlan shook his head as a laugh escaped him. “Fourteen billion humans in this universe and I had to find a cop who knows your history.”

“Not just my history,” Bryce said, relaxing just a little. “Your friend Leroy was pretty high up in the drug food chain himself.”

Leroy had obviously started to relax as well because he flipped the safety back onto his stun gun and shoved it into its holster. “That’s true,” he said with a wide grin, “until I managed to shut down their operations and get them all arrested.”

Bryce laughed. He knew that feeling. The one that made him feel like every shitty thing that had happened while undercover was finally worth it. He holstered his gun to secure the cruiser before they headed inside.

“Leroy is here to uncover evidence to support Zedahla’s testimony. Hopefully, he’ll be able to get arrests without setting off a civil war.” Lachlan ran a hand down his face tiredly. “It’s more than obvious that some of the religious leaders on this planet don’t agree with the Earth laws that are currently in place.”

Bryce nodded in acknowledgement but then turned to more personal matters first.

“How did you manage to leave Mikayla with only one husband? No offense to Brock’s skills, but I thought we all agreed she would always have at least two of us by her side.”

“Try explaining our reasoning on that one to Tracey’s husbands.”

Bryce nodded as a smile curved his lips. Rick, Tony, and Ashton were all highly trained police officers and were more than capable of protecting Mikayla and Tracey. Hell, they’d probably protect Brock while they were at it. And they wouldn’t be impressed by the inference that Mikayla still needed two husbands to protect her when they were around.

“You two may as well grab something to eat. I’ll meet you in the communications room. I reckon our annoying little visitors will be back now that the cruiser is powered down.”

“Have any landed?” Lachlan asked.

“Not yet. But I think it’s only a matter of time. At least they seem to have missed Zedahla’s escape from the planet.”

Ten minutes later, the three of them sat in the communications room monitoring the skies over the research station as they discussed how best to find evidence to support Zedahla’s story. Not one of them doubted she was telling the truth, but it was obvious from the records that Leroy had managed to collect from Earth’s database that most of the people listed as missing on this planet were young women. Add that to the seemingly accidental non-registration of female births, and it seemed obvious that women were being mistreated in horrendous ways.

“From what we can figure, Zedahla’s birth was only registered because she was knocked over by a loaded cart in the public marketplace and taken to the local hospital. She was three Earth years old at the time. Her older sister is not registered at all. Neither was her cousin.” Bryce felt his blood run cold at the realization that females could’ve been born and murdered and no one outside of the religious community would ever have known they existed.

“So what are you planning?” Bryce asked. It was obvious by the clothes he wore that Leroy followed the same faith.

“You need to understand,” Leroy said, looking rather frustrated, “that these fanatics do not represent my religion or my beliefs. They have taken the principles I hold dear and twisted them to serve their own purpose.” Bryce and Lachlan nodded. They knew this religion was widespread and for the most part peaceful. They had always assumed Zedahla’s family was part of the extreme fanatical element that seemed to sprout within organized religions. But it was good to hear their assessment confirmed by someone on the inside. “I’m thinking if I go undercover, warn them of Zedahla’s actions, and then

claim to have taken care of her and her testimony, it might give me a way in.”

“So you’re going in there to tell them that you murdered Zedahla?” Bryce asked with interest. It was certainly a foot-in-the-door story. From what he understood of Zedahla’s father, he’d likely welcome Leroy with open arms.

“It’s the only way I can explain my history. I’m a registered cop with a long history of working closely with a judge who is actively working to shut down these types of fringe elements to our religion.”

“Won’t that be really dangerous?” Lachlan asked. It was obvious from his expression that Lachlan was only now beginning to understand the dangers of undercover work. His experience was in the military, and in war you usually had a clear idea who the enemy was. But in undercover work, an officer walked a very different path. One wrong decision could literally get them killed or worse. Bryce rubbed his leg absently, even though it didn’t actually hurt anymore, the human memory was a powerful thing.

Leroy made eye contact with Bryce before answering his brother. “Yes, but it has the added advantage of making things safer for Zedahla. I’ve already arranged for her death to be registered.” He smiled at the grim expression on Lachlan’s face. “I’m still trying to get a new identity for her, but I’ve had trouble convincing the powers that be that a new identity is justified. They have suggested I wait until the case is closed and then simply remove notification of her death, but we all know she will never be safe while she is using her own name.”

“I have some old contacts who can help,” Bryce said. “You just worry about this end. We’ll make sure Zedahla is protected.”

“Good,” Leroy said with obvious relief. “She has been so brave and so helpful. I would hate to think it got her hurt later on.” He seemed to hesitate a moment but then said, “Unfortunately, if I do this, it will only make your situation here more precarious.”

“We’re only a couple of weeks away from being finished on this planet,” Bryce said.

“And we can take care of ourselves,” Lachlan assured him.

Leroy grinned. “In that case, I wish you well. Any chance of a lift into town?”

Chapter Nine

Bryce wandered through the corridors, the pessimist in him wondering how many minutes before liftoff that they were likely to encounter trouble. Three days to go. Two and a half if they packed up the station in record time.

The proximity alarm began to clang, and he was almost glad to hear the annoying sound. He hated the waiting. If trouble was coming their way, he always preferred to face it head on. He met Lachlan at the cameras just as the small pod landed inside the base. After a few moments of zero movement, the door finally opened, and a woman staggered out. She moved slowly like she was in terrible pain. Her face was covered, but her clothes were soaked in blood. Bryce glanced at his brother and recognized the same instinctive need to help and protect that he felt in his own heart. But caution held him back this time.

Despite the woman's outward appearance, there wasn't really any evidence of actual injury, and there was another occupant in the pod who hadn't yet shown themselves. As much as it pained him, Bryce knew they needed to determine the real situation before they reacted to what they saw. Fortunately, Lachlan seemed to agree because he, too, stayed where he was.

"Are the cameras recording?" Lachlan asked.

"Yes," Bryce replied. "I've kept them on around the clock and just delete the uneventful video files once a week. Something tells me this one's going to be a keeper."

Lachlan nodded his agreement as they watched the woman stagger closer. She dropped to her knees and then lowered herself to the

ground. But again, something was off. It didn't look like the collapse of a severely injured woman. It looked more like a performance by a second grader in a school play.

Their suspicions were confirmed a few minutes later when the woman lifted her head and looked back at the flying pod. Clearly, lying on the ground pretending to be injured for more than ten minutes was not in the plan. Faced with uncertain rescue, the woman became agitated, moving more freely than she had on her way out of the pod. Eventually, she lifted to her feet and hurried back the way she'd come.

A loud noise stopped her in her tracks. This time she did crumple like an injured person.

"Stay here," Bryce said as he pulled his hand gun and keyed the exit code for the door. Lachlan was a good soldier, and he'd realize that they needed to keep the front door secured. He heard Lachlan's calm voice as he called for Ryan and Ty's assistance. Then the door slammed closed behind him and all his focus went to rescuing the woman bleeding to death on their front lawn.

The man fired a couple of wild shots before slamming the pod closed and taking off. Bryce was tempted to fire fruitlessly at the retreating craft but realized he needed to concentrate his energy on the woman.

Worried that the pod would return, or more would come, Bryce lifted the woman in his arms and ran back to the front door. Lachlan opened it immediately, and Ryan and Ty were right there with the medical equipment.

"Hell," Ryan said as Bryce laid the woman on the tiled floor and moved out of their way.

"It's not all hers," Lachlan said as he again monitored the cameras. That became evident as Ryan and Ty stripped the woman's clothing from her and located the single bullet wound high on her chest. Bryce grabbed the soiled clothes and stuffed them into a bag with a vacuum seal. His brain had clicked into cop mode, and he

gathered as much evidence from the scene as he could without disturbing his brothers' attempts to save the woman's life.

"I've called for police and ambulance," John said as he came into the small foyer area. But Ryan and Ty were already using the resuscitation equipment without success.

"That's Zedahla's sister," Bryce said as he watched helplessly as her life drained away.

Despite their frantic efforts Zedahla's sister was pronounced dead by the medical team when they arrived.

* * * *

Lachlan checked the video file over and over. He'd already made several offline backups and sent duplicates via subspace communications to Leroy's boss and several other contacts he and Bryce had in the police force. It was essential that they make certain that multiple copies existed. Zedahla's sister's husband had reported seeing his wife murdered by Lachlan Davidson. The police officer was the same one Lachlan had dealt with when he'd rescued Zedahla, so he was willing to listen to Bryce and Lachlan's account. The video fortunately confirmed that Zedahla's sister was not killed by Lachlan. It very clearly showed her husband shooting her in cold blood as she hurried back to the pod.

Lachlan sent a copy of the video to Brock as well with explicit instructions to store it offline and to make sure Mikayla never saw it. The last thing she needed was to learn of Zedahla's sister's death by watching a video transmission of her murder.

"Okay, that's it for now. We've recorded your testimonies and have copies of your surveillance footage, so this should be enough for a conviction. When are you leaving the planet?"

"Three days. Less if we can swing it."

"I would suggest sooner rather than later," the officer said. "It's clear that they are desperate to get Zedahla back."

Lachlan glanced at his brothers. All seven of them seemed to be in agreement.

“We’ll go within the hour,” he told the officer.

“Good,” the man said as he shook Lachlan’s hand. He handed him a business card. “That’s my direct subspace line. Contact me every couple of weeks. I’m hoping I won’t need you to get a conviction, but I don’t want to risk this guy walking.”

Lachlan was relieved that the officer didn’t ask for contact details. The fewer people who knew where Zedahla was, the safer she would be. As the police and coroner’s vehicles left the research base, Lachlan felt his gut tighten with anxiety.

“Okay, let’s get off this rock.”

His brothers scattered as they went to ready the ship for departure.

* * * *

“They’re coming home early?” Mikayla asked, sounding very much like a child the night before Christmas. Brock just wished their reason for returning early wasn’t quite so horrible.

“Yes, baby girl. They should be here in less than three weeks.” Before she could get really excited, Brock cut her off with a question. “Have you spoken to Zedahla today?”

Mikayla’s expression faltered as she read the truth on his face. “What happened?” she asked urgently.

“Zedahla’s sister died. Her husband murdered her.”

“How d—do we know this? Wh—where did it happen?” Her voice cracked as she tried to ask another question.

Mikayla was obviously concerned about how Zedahla would take the news, so Brock pulled her onto his lap and held her close as he explained the circumstances of Zedahla’s sister’s death. Tears filled his own eyes as Mikayla cried for a woman she’d never met.

Breaking the news to Zedahla was even harder. Despite their different beliefs, it was obvious that Zedahla had been concerned for her sister's welfare. Clearly, those concerns had been justified.

Brock closed the communications screen, leaving his parents to comfort the distraught young woman, and went to fill Ashton in on the latest development. Fortunately, between the seven of them, Brock's bothers had managed to gather enough scans that the rest of the contract could be completed on their way back to Earth.

It was a relief to have them on their way home.

Hours later, Mikayla slipped into bed beside him. What started as a reassuring kiss quickly exploded into a heated coupling and within minutes they were both panting hard, trying to recover from the unexpected intensity.

"I love you," Mikayla said as she settled into his arms and held him tight.

"I love you, too, baby girl."

"Brock," she said quietly as they lay there in the dark, "you know how Bryce is working on a new identity for Zedahla."

"Yes," he said, wondering where she was going with this.

"Do you think maybe your parents could sort of adopt her?"

"Adopt?" he said, feeling thoroughly confused. The girl was seventeen, nearly eighteen. Adoption was not necessary.

"What I mean is...Well, your mothers always wanted a girl. Could we perhaps create a younger sister for you guys? It would make it much easier to protect her if she was one of the family."

"Very true," Brock agreed as details spiraled through his head with dizzying speed. His parents already acted like Zedahla was one of the family. Was there any harm in making it official? "I'll speak to Bryce first thing in the morning."

"Thank you," she whispered. She was quiet for so long that he thought she'd gone to sleep, but then she wriggled and sat up to look at him. "My family sure has grown over the last few years."

Epilogue

She woke between John and Peter. Ever since they'd made it back to Earth, her men had been even more attentive than usual. Maybe it was the fact that they finally felt safe enough to relax. There weren't any unexpected dangers here. No strange laws against women, no cute little bunnies with massive teeth and a tendency to eat their young, or snakes that looked like spit bubbles. No furry little critters to affect their libido, or fanatical religions too strong for local law enforcement to deal with. Just the usual problems and dangers one would face on a planet with eleven billion people.

"Good morning, princess," John said as he pulled her closer and nuzzled her neck sleepily. "Did you sleep well?"

"Very well," she said truthfully. Maybe it was the fresh air on Earth or the easing of tension in her men, but she'd slept better in the past few weeks than she had in years. Unlike on the station where each brother had his own room and Mikayla bounced from bed to bed, here they'd set up a room entirely for her. It could simply be that she truly felt like she belonged.

Strange how that never seemed to have affected her until it had changed.

With Peter still sleeping behind her, Mikayla climbed over John and headed into the bathroom. By the time she had the shower turned on, John was stepping in with her. Still half asleep, she happily let him wash her down.

Soapy hands ran across her suddenly peaked nipples, waking her more thoroughly than a strong cup of coffee. She moaned as John's clever fingers plucked at the taut nubs and sent tendrils of heat curling

low in her belly. He stood behind her, his hard cock rubbing against the crease of her ass as he worked the soap lower, cleansing her belly, her hips, her now throbbing pussy.

She gasped as his fingers found her clit, and he turned her into the spray of water to rinse the bubbles away. "I love you," he murmured into her ear a moment before he tilted her forward, placed her hands against the cool tiles, and slid his hard cock into her pussy. He fucked her leisurely, gliding in and out of her slick flesh as the water sluiced between them.

His hands roamed over her skin, and he pressed soft, sucking kisses against her neck and spine. Peter stepped into the shower, and John pulled out, turned her around, and pressed her against his brother. He thrust back into her harder, faster, deeper. His need growing as he fucked her while Peter held her tight.

"Good morning, beautiful," Peter said as he pressed nibbling little kisses against her shoulders, neck, and jaw. She moaned in response, her pussy throbbing as John pounded into her again and again and again. Peter's fingers found her clit, pressing, rubbing, teasing the swollen nub until she writhed against them both. Tension gripped her, every muscle pulling tight, every nerve ending alive with sensation. She screamed as her orgasm burst free and pounded through her. She closed her eyes, moaning as John's cock pulsed inside her.

She barely had a moment to recover before Peter turned her around, pressed her against John, and thrust into her pussy. Her internal muscles still fluttered with excitement, and Peter groaned as her body caressed him.

But he slowed things down, lifting and sliding her along his hard length as if they had all the time in the world. It reminded her of the first time they'd made love, of that moment that she realized she loved them all, and the way Peter had pushed her into realizing they loved her back.

Tears filled her eyes as she comprehended just how amazing her men were. They'd not only accepted that she could love them all

equally, they'd done everything they could to reassure her that life with her was enough—even if they never had children together.

Peter slowed his movements even more to kiss the tears from her eyes. He didn't press for an explanation, just held her close and rocked into and out of her body in gentle rhythm.

She closed her eyes and relaxed into her lovers' care. But then the tension wound tighter, and Peter's tempo increased. He held her legs wide, John holding her upright as Peter thrust into her body over and over and over.

Fingers found her clit, rubbed it gently, as Peter fucked her faster.

Mikayla tensed, her muscles quivering as her orgasm neared. She panted, holding back, waiting for Peter, but then John whispered "come." She moaned, the sound echoing off the tiles, wrapping around them as Peter thrust hard and deep one last time. He came with a groan, his arms pulling her tight against him as she pressed her lips to his.

Panting hard from their exhaustion, they eventually managed to get cleaned up and drag themselves from the shower. Mikayla was tempted to crawl back into bed, but the smell of breakfast cooking had her stomach grumbling loudly.

John laughed and pulled her into his arms. "We could send Peter to bring us breakfast in bed." Peter laughed and made a counteroffer, but in the end, the three of them headed downstairs together.

Zedahla—now known as Emily Davidson—appeared on the communicator screen as she spoke to Lachlan, excitedly telling him about the school courses she was currently studying. Zedahla had been pleased by Mikayla's suggestion and more than happy to have eight protective older brothers trying to tell her what to do. Thanks to Mikayla's influence, getting their younger *sister* to listen was not always an easy task, but for the most part, she was a very sensible young woman.

They hadn't heard any news of the investigation into her cousin's murder, but they knew Leroy was still working undercover. They all

worried for the police officer, and even though she'd been frightened of him at the time, Zedahla knew he was a good man. As if she felt the need to make up for what Leroy risked and all that her sister and cousin had lost, Zedahla studied hard in an effort to catch up to others her own age. At the moment, she was taking high school courses via satellite so that she would be ready to join her peers at the local school next year. She'd also made sure that her new identity was solid. She even knew the family history almost better than the men who'd lived it.

Mikayla sat quietly as the conversation flowed around her for a while. Plans, small and large, were discussed and rehashed and argued over. It was quite a big change from what they'd been doing on other planets, but they were all ready for a new challenge. They'd chosen a home that had once been a bed and breakfast on a working farm, and from there, the idea for a simple farming life had grown. Even if modern conveniences made it far easier than the backbreaking work it once was, people still needed to eat, and the Davidson family was more than happy to provide.

The table was even noisier these days and Mikayla watched quietly as her family went about the business of living. There was only one thing missing, and it was the one thing she'd been too frightened to try and give them.

"What are the medical facilities like in town?" Mikayla blurted out the question a little too loudly. All sound stopped as they turned to her, confusion and concern on all their faces. Lachlan raised an eyebrow at her out-of-the-blue question.

"Actually," Ryan piped in, "there's an excellent hospital and some highly qualified doctors not far from here."

"So the medical facilities are good?" Mikayla asked as she made eye contact with each of her men. They nodded, and Mikayla smiled as she imagined her husbands' reactions to her next words. "Because I have an idea," she said, swallowing nervously. She tried to still the butterflies beating in her stomach with a deep breath and continued.

“Considering that our new home has good medical facilities, I was wondering if...” Holy cow, this was a lot harder than she’d thought it would be.

Lachlan was smiling at her discomfort, obviously reading the body language she was struggling to control. She stuck her tongue out at him, giggled at her childish behavior, and then threw the idea out there.

“I’d like to try again for a baby. What do you think?”

End of Book 5: Hot Inspiration

**To be continued in
Book 6: Mikayla’s Family**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Abby Blake prefers to read or write romance over just about everything else—except maybe chocolate. Most days she can be found hurrying to do what needs to be done so that she can curl up with her laptop and her latest bunch of heroes.

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