

THE RAPUNZEL FACTOR

A woman with long, light-colored hair in a braid stands on a balcony. She is wearing a long, flowing red gown with intricate gold embroidery. The background features a large, full moon, a white bird in flight, and some foliage.

VIOLA
GRACE

Rapunzel's strange circumstances led to her being a housing for energy, her parentage made her a princess. With the fate of the next Xefar queen in her hands, Rapunzel must go on a journey with a strange Duke who's interest in her hair sparks a reciprocal fascination. Arnolth is unlike any man she has ever spent time with...but that would make sense with her being raised underground in an ant colony.

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The Rapunzel Factor
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The Rapunzel Factor
A Trapezium Exclusive

By

Viola Grace

“Rapunzel, come. The queen demands your presence.”

Rapunzel looked up from the documents that she was preparing. “I will be there immediately.”

The drone clicked his mandibles and waited for her. She was completing preparations for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the ambassadorial summit that had begun her life. With the papers in order, she sealed them in her containment unit and followed the drone to their queen.

The path they took was not a standard tunnel. When Rapunzel was handed over to the queen as her heir, new pathways were built so that she wouldn’t have to climb and slide her way around. She still had memories of clambering through the tunnels, playing hide and seek with her nannies.

Their path took them directly to the queen and Rapunzel folded her arms against her body while lowering her head. “What may I do for you, my queen, mother of us all?”

The small box at her neck converted her speech into the clicks and whistles that the Xefar spoke. Rapunzel had tried to learn the language as a child, but her accent was atrocious.

The queen raised her head and spoke, her huge

abdomen anchoring her to the royal chamber. "My dearest child, you are needed to obtain the strands for the next queen."

Rapunzel looked up and met the multi-faceted gaze of her adoptive parent.

"I thought they were supposed to have sent that to you last week?"

"They were. The Jarok family has not responded to my queries. It seems a more direct approach is required."

Rapunzel made her affirmation click. The one noise that didn't irritate the queen. "When do I leave?"

"Now. Pack up whatever clothing you require for decency and find out what is delaying my strands."

The tone of the clicks was frenzied and Rapunzel knew why.

Twenty-five years and nine months earlier, the leman of the youngest prince of the Jarok family had crept into the kitchen and found the heap of golden strands that were reserved for the young Xefar queen.

Tempted beyond reason, the woman fell upon the strands and consumed them, the high hormone spike imparted by the strands sent her into a frenzy and she had found her provider and kept him in his quarters for five days.

When the leman left her lord, he was exhausted and she was pregnant. Apologies were sent to the

queen of the Xefar and in return for forgiveness, she demanded that the child born of the strand coupling be given to her when it could be separated from its mother.

The leman died in labour, the energy she was carrying within far too much for her human frame. Rapunzel had been offered to her father, but with his favourite companion dead, he rejected her after acknowledging her as the child of that frenzied union.

With a wet nurse, she was sent to the Xefar and from there she remained in a safe nursery until she was able to articulate that she was not edible.

Becoming a princess of the Xefar involved the queen's heavy musk mixed with Rapunzel's own scent being placed in the far reaches of the underground city. Her golden hair was embedded in the walls, glowing in a quiet pronouncement of her status.

"Of course, dearest mother. I will be gone within the hour. Will I receive a guide?" She kept her arms folded tightly against her body, her feet together. It was a basic sign of respect for the deadly mandibles that the queen wielded.

"We have arranged a soft escort for you."

The queen's use of the word *soft* was derisive, but Rapunzel did not take it personally, it was simply the Xefar reference for the bipedal beings that spawned their princess.

"Shall I go?"

"Please, and, daughter?"

"Yes."

"Be careful. The soft world is not what you are used to. They may try to manipulate you into surrendering the strands to them, instead of giving them to me as is my right." The queen reached out with one of her forelegs and stroked it down Rapunzel's cheek.

The prickle and sting of the spurred leg down her face made her smile. It was rare that her mother gave her affection in front of the workers.

"I will be careful. You will have the means to lay the next breeder, my dear mother."

"You have been an untraditional but helpful daughter. Enjoy your travel."

Dismissed, Rapunzel returned to her room and quickly packed her wraps. The drone that attended her carried her pack through the tunnels until they reached the exterior access tunnel.

The cool air toyed with Rapunzel's hair, lifting a few glowing golden strands to dance on the breeze.

She could see the vague outline of the warriors guarding the entrance to the Xefar collective. Their huge, three-lobed bulk kept other large insects out while allowing a free flow of oxygen.

She took the pack from her drone and patted him between the eyes, rubbing his scent sensors in goodbye.

"Take care, Princess. We await your return."

The clicks and hums of his tone made her smile.

"I will see you when I have completed my mission." Taking a deep, shaking breath, she passed the warriors at the front entrance and blinked at the brightness of the sun.

Rapunzel quickly flipped her veil over her face, the delicate silk allowing for airflow while restricting the light that struck her eyes.

"Miss? Are you the one I am waiting for?"

She peered through the gauzy silk and took in the softy sitting on the rocks to the left of the Xefar colony entrance.

"I suppose that would depend. What are you waiting for?"

"I am to escort the princess of the Xefar to the capitol." He stood and approached her, stopping when a warrior clicked in a proximity alert.

Rapunzel smiled and took a few steps out of the alert zone. "That is me, or I am she. Whatever."

The clicking coming from her neck was distracting him. He kept glancing at the warriors with a worried frown. Sighing, she took a few more steps toward him and turned off her translator.

"May I ask your name, sir?"

"Duke Arnolth of Carria, at your service."

"Princess Rapunzel. How long is it to the capitol?" She walked with him and stopped short at the two horses waiting for them. The last time she saw a horse, it was being prepared for her

meal.

"It is two days ride. We will have to be careful, I have heard of a sickness in the city." He extended his hand to her.

She blinked and tried to remember what he was trying to imply with the gesture. Timid, she extended her own hand and he wrapped his fingers around hers. She laughed. "That feels a little odd."

His brow furrowed in confusion. "What does?"

"Hands. The Xefar don't use hands for touch. It is usually feelers or sensors on their heads."

Arnolth seemed surprised, but led her to the horses without another word. He took her pack and tied it to the saddle and then cupped his hands toward her.

"What do you want?"

"Put your foot here and I will lift you onto the horse. Please tell me you have ridden before."

She stabilized herself on the saddle and placed her foot in his hands. He lifted, she pushed and in a matter of seconds, she was settled in the saddle. "I haven't ridden horses, but I have ridden. We have a number of special events that I get taken to during the year. I ride the drone."

"The drone?"

"One of my mother's husbands. He mated with her years ago and now that he is neutered, he is my attendant and guard." She shifted on the peculiar piece of leather, her left thigh completely exposed,

her bare feet mimicking his in the stirrups.

"Neutered?" Arnolth seemed a little distressed.

"Of course. He implanted the queen with his seed and his testicles are now within her, spawning a new generation." She watched him closely and followed his movements with the reins. The horse started to move and she laughed in triumph.

"You are doing well, Princess. Please continue to face forward." His gaze drifted from her veil to her bound breasts and the wrap that she wore from navel to waist. "Do you have any other clothing?"

"Yes. I have the formal wear that I use for occasions of state." She patted the pack on her horse.

"Good. I enjoy the view, but the city folk are a little less understanding."

She looked down at the clothing and skin that was exposed. "All of the human genitals are covered, I don't see the problem."

"Ah, well...never mind." He kicked his horse into a light trot and hers followed suit.

They travelled for hours, barely speaking. Rapunzel was uncomfortable by the time they stopped. Her life in the tunnels was one that was usually lived on her feet. This much sitting was painful.

She was able to get her feet free of the stirrups, but she couldn't move her legs enough to get them over the saddle. "Um...help."

He chuckled and reached up, gripping her waist. She tumbled into his arms and collapsed against him. "Ow."

With her body plastered against his, she couldn't help but notice a ridge of interest in his trousers, it twitched and surged against her while she squirmed to stand on her own. Heat filled her cheeks and swirled in her belly.

"I am sorry, I should have stopped to let you rest." He shifted his arms to hold her at arm's length.

"It would have been nice, but we are on a timeline. I understand the urgency." She noticed that he was trying to peer through her veil and smiled. Humans had a funny way around partial nudity and any scrap of fabric had to be removed or seen through.

He slowly parted from her and set about preparing their camp. She thought about his rank and had to ask, "How is it that you know how to camp? I thought dukes were all about fancy clothing and living in town."

He grinned as he started their fire just as the light of the sun reddened. She flipped back her veil and hissed in sympathy as he burned himself. "Are you all right?"

He put his fingers in his mouth and nodded. "Thank you for asking. I just wasn't expecting you to remove your veil. I thought it was a Xefar modesty thing."

She cocked her head. "The Xefar don't wear anything. Ever. I simply wear the veil because after my life underground, the bright light of the sun takes a few days to get used to."

He blinked. "Oh. I hadn't thought of that."

"Most softies don't."

"Softies?"

She blushed and hoped that the red sunlight concealed it. "It is a Xefar term for races that are not encased with exoskeletons."

"I see." He paused. "I have some food if you are hungry."

"Please. Do you have any water?"

He cursed quietly and went to her saddle. He removed a bag and brought it to her. "I thought you knew what it was. I apologize."

She smiled and took it from him. "I am aware of softy trappings in theory, but I have never been exposed to them for more than a few hours at a time."

He sat back and she took in his physique as well as his striking features. His hair was many shades darker than hers, and his eyes were the same rich brown. Instead of skin that was pale gold, his was a darker bronze, making him seem like a softy statue come to life.

"Do all men in your colony look like you?" She blurted it out before she thought about it.

A soft grin spread over his lips. "No. I am by far the most handsome and the bravest."

“Oh. You are a warrior then.” She was disappointed. Warriors were not for breeding and that meant that the stirring heat in her was going to remain unsatisfied.

“Only when I have to be. I prefer the role of lover to that of fighter.”

Rapunzel watched him shift closer to her. “I don’t understand. You can be both?”

He paused in surprise. “Um, not usually at the same time. Why?”

“In the Xefar, you are what you were born to be. You cannot be anything else. Warriors guard, drones fuck and then become companions, workers work. The queen lays and controls the others with her scent and ability to birth the next queen, ensuring the continuation of the colony.”

Arnolth rubbed his head. “So, you have not been with men of your own kind?”

“No. Of course not. The only visitors were politicians and traders as well as the occasional ambassador. None were left alone with me, although several brought me gifts and asked my mother for one of my limbs. She thought that was rude and sent them on their way.”

“Your limbs? They wouldn’t have been asking for your hand, would they?”

She smiled and moved closer to the fire, and closer to him. “Yes. Why they had such an interest in it I don’t know.”

He laughed weakly. “It is a request for a mating

partner, to use your terms. They were asking on behalf of their own dignitaries and rulers. You are a princess and they must have been trying to cement the treaties with your people."

"Really?" She laughed. "What would they want with me? I am not completely human."

"To lock in good relations with the Xefar. They have one of the most prolific geological excavation systems on this planet." Arnolth shifted. "I believe it is why you are being sent to the capitol."

"What? Why?" Rapunzel rubbed at her forehead.

"To ensure the gems and minerals will flow. An alliance with you would bring a family a guaranteed status."

She fussed a little and finally decided to give herself a little peace of mind. "I need to bathe. Do you mind nudity?"

"We don't have enough water for you to bathe with."

Rapunzel gave him a curious look and started to undo her braid, "I don't need water. It is one of the bonuses of this hair of mine."

She chuckled, loosening her hair before removing her breast band and the skirt. A deep breath and closed eyes later, her hair was glowing and swirling around her, the energy inherent in her body scrubbing her clean.

His astonished gasp caused her to laugh as the energy whirled and arced through the night sky.

Her hair lifted and twisted back into its standard braid the moment it was clean. Her body shone a pale gold in the firelight and she smiled at her companion. "See?"

The energy washing through and over her was just what her mind needed to process the new information.

"Princess, what was that?"

"Well, as the story goes, my mother ate the Xefar queen breeding fibres. It contained enough power to create a queen designed to breed thousands of Xefar for the colony. That power was trapped in my body and it is useful at times."

She went to her pack and pulled out a change of clothing.

"You really have no trouble being nude in front of strangers, do you?"

Rapunzel gave him an astonished look. "Why would I? There is no deformity in my body, no twist in my limbs, no obvious imperfection. I was raised to believe that a whole body is all that one needs to be part of a society."

"Well, your body is lovely." He was standing close to her and the heat from his body was warring with the blaze of the fire. "You do not need to cover up on my account."

"Do we have any food?"

He sighed and took a few steps aside to his own packs. He passed her some bread and dried meat. "I am sorry it is all I have to offer."

She put her skirt down on the ground and sat on it, curling her legs to one side. She patted the other side of the skirt and he took her invitation in an instant.

"So, tell me more about the softies that we will meet." She ate the meat between sips of water and tried to make her way to the bread.

"Late tomorrow you will enter the city. We will stop on the edge of town so that you can put on your formal wear. At that point we will ride for the palace."

"When was the last time you were there?"

"A few years ago. I remember meeting your father and his wife as well as the rest of the royal family." His face took on a sober sadness. "He was a man who had once had a sense of humour and lost it when his leman died."

"Did he love her?"

"He did. He married his wife out of family obligation and when they had no children, he publicly was seen with your mother. Her name was Niskala Fannith and she was a second generation colonist."

Rapunzel looked at him, her eyes wide. "Niskala? No one ever mentioned her name before."

"Your father refused to have her name spoken at court. He missed her far too much to be reminded day after day."

She blinked. "It is still bizarre to think that I had

a male parent who had a say in the dispensation of his offspring."

Arnolth moved closer and after a short hesitation, he placed his hand on her shoulder. "Human males have a lot of input in their offspring's lives. Don't you think you would want your children to know their father?"

Her skin pebbled at the warmth of his hand. "I have never considered having children. The Xefar live their lives day by day. Our future is undetermined."

"Humans enjoy planning." He stroked her skin lightly as if testing her.

Her voice came out with a breathless sigh. "What are you planning now?"

He didn't tell her, he leaned toward her and pressed his lips to hers.

Surprise warred with a surge of emotion that she couldn't define. She turned fully toward him and reached for his shoulders. She pulled away for an instant. "You can plan for the future, I am going to live in the moment."

She returned to the kiss and threaded her fingers in his hair, holding him tightly to her. The intriguing bulge beneath his tunic jerked again as she rocked against him. Her thighs parted as she pressed him to the ground.

He held her off. "A moment. I need to create even footing."

She sat back in a confusion of weltering

hormones and emotions. She watched as his silhouette removed its cloak, spread it next to the fire and kicked his boots free. A moment later, his trousers hit the ground followed by his tunic.

The jutting of his erection surprised her by the angle at which it protruded. She wasn't sure what she had expected, but the hot throbbing girth wasn't it.

She was so caught up in her examination that when he turned her to her back and came down on top of her, she merely blinked at him in surprise. Her blood sang with anticipation, her mind spinning with eagerness as he fitted himself to her.

The peculiar feeling of his blunt hardness wedging into her opening caught her attention. She bit her lip as he worked himself into her in tiny increments.

The fixed expression on his features delayed her normal questioning. Rapunzel yelped in shock as he rocked his hips against her and a sharp pain ran along her nerves.

Her skin immediately took on its glow of healing as it tried to repair her. "What the hell was that?"

She was pushing against Arnolth's shoulders with her hands and sweat was pooling on his brow and slicking his skin.

"Take it easy, Princess. You were a virgin and now are not. Your body will adjust to me, I simply have to wait until your glow subsides."

Rapunzel took internal inventory. The hard length of his cock was still within her, throbbing restlessly. "How do you know you have to wait?"

"The Xefar queen gave me instructions that didn't make sense until now." He pressed his forehead against hers and shifted his weight.

The tingle of sensation went from an irritant to enthralling in a moment. She tilted her hips and soon was meeting his slow thrusts with timid forays of her own body.

A twisting power wound through her, causing a frenzy that made her dig her fingers into Arnolth's backside, pulling him into her with all of her strength. In one surge, her mind broke into bright sparks that sprinkled into the stars before coming back into one large and satisfied gathering.

Arnolth grunted and gave a short flurry of thrusts that culminated in a long low shudder and his collapse on extended arms.

She touched his cheek and smiled. "Softy mating has definite appeal. How many males do I have to take to my bed?"

He gave her a grim look. "Pair bonding is the accepted norm. As a princess, you would not be expected to have more than one mate."

She could feel him inside her, softer but still there. Her body was still randomly clenching around him and she could tell by the tensing of his muscles that he could feel it, too.

"Do you have a mate?"

He rolled to one side and pulled her against him, his body keeping hers warm as the stars blinked above them.

"No. I do not have a mate. I was asked to accompany you to the city with the hope that I would appeal to your instincts. Your mother's letter was very specific."

Rapunzel leaned back and gave him a surprised look. "She orchestrated this?"

"Only if you were receptive. If you had given any signs of distaste or disinterest I would have stopped immediately."

She stared at his features in the flickering firelight. She found the strong slope of his nose, the hard chin and full lips very pleasing. The column of his neck meeting the muscles leading to his thick shoulders made her heart flutter and the care with which he was holding her made something softer spring to life.

"You have no regrets? I am not quite sure what we were doing." She bit her lip again.

He leaned forward and drew her lip between his. "No regrets. Are you sore?"

"No. My energy has taken care of the small wound you inflicted. If that kind of pain is normal, I don't know how humans have kept their population up."

He chuckled. "It is only the first time. After tonight, you will be able to engage in this kind of activity any time you wish without injury."

"Oh, excellent. This is the sort of thing that could be a lot of fun." She sighed and snuggled against him.

"And yet, you can have me for the event any time. I would recommend that you not try this with just any human male."

Laughter welled within her, but she held it back. "I will take that under advisement. I am rather tired now, can we sleep?"

"Of course. We have quite a ride on our schedule tomorrow." Arnolth pulled her tightly to him and flipped his cloak over her.

Though he had woken with another erection, Arnolth had not tried to couple with her again. Rapunzel was a little confused, but she ate the food he provided and got back on the horse after it was saddled.

He rode next to her and she found herself intensely curious about him. "Why are you not living in the capitol?"

"I chose to live and manage my family's concerns outside the city. Life there was too complicated for me and my father was pressuring me to marry."

"You don't wish to mate?" She felt slightly unsure. Without her willing it, her mind had begun to spin a future with him at her side.

"Mating for life has never been appealing." His words came out before he realized what he said.

His quick words showed his awareness of his lack of tact. "Until now. Now it is on my mind frequently."

His glance to his groin invited hers to follow. His erection was visible under his clothing.

She blushed and grinned as memories of the previous night's encounter filled her mind. "I see. I really do."

"What about you? Have you never thought of taking a mate and raising a family?"

Rapunzel got a sinking feeling in her belly. "We don't know if I can have a family. The energy may not be conducive to a human pregnancy."

"There are off world medical officers at the capitol. They can probably run scans so you would know whether it is possible or not."

"I suppose that they could. I would rather find a mate who was not fixated on my ability to breed."

He chuckled. "It isn't the breeding, it's the trying that has my attention."

She smiled and took some water from her bag. Attempting to have offspring was suddenly on her mind as well and it never had been more than a fleeting image in her thoughts before this day.

Their conversation dwindled as both of them were lost in thought. A light snack in the saddle and they were soon approaching the growing capitol with the spaceport in the background.

"I think I should get into my formal wear now."

"We will head into that copse of trees. It should

keep any casual travellers from seeing you before you are dressed." He led her horse to the gathering of greenery.

She had her clothing out of the pack before they had even drawn to a halt. The glowing red and gold gown was draped over the edge of the saddle as she slid to the ground.

"Do you need help?"

She laughed at the heated eagerness in his tone. "You can hold my hair out of the way while I put the gown on."

He was at her side in an instant, filling his hands with her gold locks and lifting the heavy braid away from her. His yelp of surprise when it curled around his wrists caused her to laugh out loud once again.

"I am sorry, but it was too funny. The energy holds it together and allows me to manipulate it." She snaked her braid down the front of his tunic and under the edge to the opening of his trousers.

The golden braid wrapped and writhed against him, tugging his cock out and stroking rapidly against it until he was up on his toes.

When he groaned and his hands clenched against her skull, she moved her hair faster and the arc of semen missed her by an inch.

Gasping and shaking, he got himself under control. "You don't really need help, do you?"

"No, you can have a seat and watch."

He stumbled off to one side and she quickly

removed her skirt and band, opening her gown and stepping into it. Her hair rolled up her head to form a heavy coronet with her long braid cascading down past her hip on the right side.

"How do I look?"

"Like a princess."

She was about to get on the horse when she realized something. "Whoops, shoes."

The jewelled sandals had been crafted by her drone, based on a pattern she had been given by one of the few traders to the colony. They laced into place with delicate ribbons and when she saw Arnolth putting on his own embroidered tunic and vest, she knew she had made the right choice.

"A duke and a princess will enter that city. I hope that they are waiting for us." Suddenly nervous, she took a hopping step and sat sideways on the horse. Her skirt would not allow anything else.

"They will be. From dispatches that I have received, anyone with royal blood is going to be welcome beyond measure." His words confused her, but before she could ask, he took her horse's reins and tugged it to follow his.

She took the hint and remained quiet while he took her down the road. They passed several farmers and wagons loaded with goods on the way, but aside from a few curious looks, no one spoke to her.

The city gates were wide open, a peculiar

decoration was everywhere. Black ribbons and swags of fabric covered windows and ran across doors. A sombre attitude was in the people that they saw in their differing conveyances. Here in the capitol it was practical to have the multiple tech levels racing around. Out in the wastelands and the farmlands, the vehicles were more specialized and suited to the environment.

When her horse drew even with Arnolth's, she noticed a tightness around his mouth. She kept her voice low, "What is it?"

"There has been a death in the royal family. It is recent or I would have heard of it."

She nodded while she wondered if her father had been the one to pass on.

When they entered the bailey of the palace, grooms came forward and took the reins. Rapunzel dismounted by sliding off the saddle.

A man in an embroidered tunic bustled toward them. "Duke Carria, you have been eagerly awaited."

Arnolth nodded to the man while lifting Rapunzel's hand. "Encar, may I present to you her royal highness, Princess Rapunzel of the Xefar."

The man froze in place, his expression going from excited to mournful in a second. "I am delighted to meet you, Princess. I am Encar, major domo to the house of Jarok, at your service."

"Pleased to meet you, Encar. I need to speak with the head of the house of Jarok, it is a matter of

urgency." She inclined her coronet and her hair glowed brightly in the afternoon sun.

"Ah. Of course. Please come inside so I may explain the situation." Encar bowed low and escorted them into the palace.

Black covered every inch of the palace surfaces and they walked through endless hallways with quiet black-clad staff moving silently past them.

Their destination was a huge council hall, the head table empty, but the rest of the benches filled to capacity.

Encar took a deep breath. "Gentlemen, may I present our Queen, Rapunzel of the Xefar."

The men stood and applauded while Rapunzel looked frantically from face to face. "What?"

"Take your seat and I will explain." Encar's voice was not unkind, but he was firm.

Arnolth led her to an ornate chair and helped her to sit. He stood off to one side.

"Duke Carria, please take your seat."

"I would prefer that he stay near me, this is a bit of a shock."

Encar's eyes widened, but he nodded. "As some of you are aware, our treaty with the Xefar is all that allows us to remain on this planet. What most of you do not know, is that the Jarok family is the sole point of entitlement. If there is no member of that family on this world, all of the settlers must leave."

He dragged in a heavy breath. "To that end, the

Corx government paid to have a virus created to wipe out the entire Jarok line. It was released on the east coast and killed the last member of the royal family two days ago."

Rapunzel blinked. "But I live to the east."

"We know. Either the energy in your system made you immune, or the Xefar queen kept you safe, either way, she sent you here to us after our frantic plea."

She sat back and drummed her fingers on the edge of the chair. "What about the breeding strands for the queen?"

"They are on their way. We dispatched them the moment she sent the messenger to let us know you were coming."

Rapunzel sighed. It was like her mother to do something of this nature. "What if the virus kills me?"

"It is inert already. The Coalition has charged the Corx with attempted genocide of a family line."

"So, what is there for me to do?"

Encar and the others looked at her in shock. "You can lead us. Sign treaties, negotiate, meet with dignitaries. Standard duties of a ruling house."

Rapunzel thought of her desk in the colony. The hours she had spent pouring over treaties and histories. "I suppose that I can manage that."

"Now, there is one matter for your immediate

consideration. As you are the last of your line, you will need an heir as soon as possible. Being a female, this requires that you choose a mate —”

“Arnolth.”

A murmur of unease ran through the crowds. Several men near her age looked offended.

“Now, my queen, there is no need to choose immediately. Perhaps a moment of introduction or contemplation —”

“Arnolth if he will agree.” Rapunzel looked to her travel companion and noted his surprised, pleased grin.

“I will.”

Encar shifted and pulled at his neckline. “Well, if you insist, Duke Carria has the requisite bloodlines. I will make formal arrangements immediately.”

Rapunzel sat back and watched the men, nobles she guessed, argue and fight about her choice of mate. She beckoned to Arnolth and her hair reached out to gently wrap around his neck and pull him closer the moment he was within range.

She kissed his smiling mouth and when she let him break apart, the room was silent. “I think that cooled their jets, to use a space traveler phrase.”

“I believe that it did indeed work.”

Rapunzel grinned and looked around her. She had ended up in Arnolth’s lap and the room was slowly emptying. Encar left them with a wink and a whisper that he would be on the other side of the

door.

"So, are you shocked by these events?" Arnolth was stroking her cheek, neck and breast in turn.

"Less so than I should have been. Mother has always been a schemer. It will be good to communicate with her electronically though." She sighed and looped her arms around his neck, letting her hair resume its twisted coil on her head.

"Do you think you can do this? As the sole heir to the Jarok fortunes, you can leave and boot all of the colonists back to the stars."

"I can do this. I want to stay near mother in her last years. When she gets her strands, she will create the next queen and as soon as it can breed, she will die. She has already lived beyond her time because of me. There is only one matter to consider..."

"What is that, Rapunzel?"

"In Xefar tradition, I believe that you should be neutered after I have the requisite number of children from you." She kept her face straight.

He looked nervous. "How many children?"

"Well, mother had thousands, but I think I will be happy with ten or so." She laughed at his relieved grin. "We will revisit neutering if you ever happen to try breeding with another woman."

He pressed his lips to hers. "As long as you don't find another drone to emasculate before that moment."

"Deal."

Chuckling as she moved to straddle him, she tried to strip herself and him, fighting the discomfort of clothing, aching for skin on skin.

Arnolth asked quickly. "What are we doing?"

"If I am right...defiling a throne. If not we are furthering my education."

"Righto, excellent."

All other words were shoved aside as she mounted him and let him slide deep. Details were for another time. She was all for living in the moment.

The moment was wonderful and filled with possibilities for the future.

About the Author

Viola Grace was born in Manitoba, Canada where she still resides today. She really likes it there. She has no pets and can barely keep sea monkeys alive for a reasonable amount of time. Her line of day job tends to be analytical which leaves her mind hopping to weave stories. No co-worker is safe from her character analysis. In keeping with busy hands are happy hands, her hobbies have included cross-stitch, needlepoint, quilting, costuming, cake decorating, baking, cooking, metal work, beading, sculpting, painting, doll making, henna tattoos, chain mail, and a few others that have been forgotten. It is quite often that these hobbies make their way into her tales.

Viola's fetishes include boots and corsetry, and her greatest weakness is her uncontrollable blush. Her writing actively pursues the Happily Ever After that so rarely occurs in nature. It is an admirable thing and something that we should all strive for. To find one that we truly like, as well as love.