

*The*  
REPOPULATION  
PROGRAMME  
EARTH:  
ROUND ONE  
First Five Chapters

**1**



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## WARNING

This book contains sexually explicit scenes, references and adult language, this might be offensive for some readers. PHW Love novels are intended for ADULTS ONLY, as defined by the laws of the country in which the purchase was made. Please take care to save such books safely where underage readers cannot access it.



# Author's Note on Language

## **It's the old non American dialect disclaimer.**

I'm giving fair warning I'm from a little known, two island country deep within the Southern Hemisphere - New Zealand.

As such, the version of English that is standard here is what I'll be subjecting you, the lovely reader to.

Yes, it means an often weird and eclectic mix of both American and British dialect. Don't be confused seeing 'recognise' or 'apologise' instead of the covert 'z.' It's not that we don't like 'z' but with our fondness of 'u' in words like 'colour' and 'neighbour,' we don't want to be hoarders of all the end letters in the alphabet, now do we. Shall I mention we also have a fondness for double 'L.' Some vices can never be overcome.

I should also note while most of us describe our height in feet and inches. In the quaint, middle of nowhere, blessed country where I live, we use the metric system. Pounds are not used to describe weight; metres determine length, so on and so forth. I try to incorporate both in my stories, so don't feel I'm being inconsistent, I am paying homage to my up bringing while acknowledging my lovely fellow readers from different spaces.

We Kiwi's are a unique bunch, and I hope you enjoy reading from a land where six degrees of separation is more like two, and whole heartedly believe togs aren't undies until you cross the street.

Love and Light  
PHW Love





## **\*Disclaimer\***

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### **Please NOTE:**

This book has trigger warnings.

Violence, dominance, a scripted non consensual attempt, adult interactions, questionable consent.

Reader discretion is advised. Please be kind to yourself

*This book is for adults only.*

## **What Romance are you reading?**

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- **A** Alien/Sci-fi
- B** Batting for the same team/Bi
- C** Contemporary
- D** Dark
- E** Erotic
- F** Fantasy/Paranormal





This book was inspired by all things Sci-Fi, Scientific and  
the burning  
desire that even aliens deserve  
a...

# *Happily Ever After*







# CHAPTER 1

Sebastian gazed at the wall clock as he listened to those around him drown in the grim results of another failed attempt—another blow to their civilisation. He sighed, shifting his gaze towards the ceiling, 11:46 a.m. Time wasn't his friend, and he swivelled his chair, fighting his thoughts and heavy heart. The news currently crippling the boardroom landed on his desk last week.

No female embryos.

One hundred and fifty blastocysts, and not one.

He'd hoped to be proven wrong, but five years later, the news never changed. In the beginning, there'd been small successes, but they'd etched themselves into the history books. The harder they tried, the faster they failed.

And now.

They'd reached the point of no return.

If they didn't change their trajectory, they faced extinction. That reality blew a sigh off his boredom as he failed to find relief stretching out on the soft black leather chair and spread his legs.

Damn-it.

Must everything fail he grunted, his three-piece suit and tie were more restrictive than the heavily wooden boardroom holding him prisoner. His body already bloody hated him, protesting in stellar form. He couldn't blame his muscles, he too preferred movement, sparring—even war, than his rear turning numb being stuck in meetings. 7 a.m., his nightmare started, and

it wouldn't relent until the day said goodbye, and even that, he understood, was wishful thinking.

His continued boredom didn't do him any favours either. He knew the results, his attendance became a waste of time. If anything, it tortured him. Every word echoed how perilously close this thrust them towards the bridge of annihilation.

Another sigh burst from his solemn posture, shifting the stale air. His pen, loose in his grip, bounced in a dull tap as it danced from nip to top, while he stared at it intently, yet oblivious to its movement. The bone crushing silence against its resonant symphony while his colleagues digested the news, heightened their devastating fall from existence. He didn't bother facing them, they'd only have mirrored his own when he first heard. Their only hope now lay in the women that'd arrived earlier that morning.

Five Earth women.

Their last hope and greatest risk.

Sure, for seven decades since finding Earth they'd communicated, even shared their DNA, which matched theirs at ninety-nine point ninety-nine percent. But that slight variation still meant biological differences, ones he feared would derail this trial.

It wasn't their height difference, with Delta men standing mid-six foot range on average, no.

Again, he sighed.

No.

It was their muscular disposition. At nearly twice the bulk of human men, he couldn't ignore the risks. Even the smallest Deltarian adult male was bigger, stronger, more defined, and women. They too, bore more height and muscle.

Delicate just didn't exist on Delta.

That sole reason nearly shelved it before they'd passed the first stage. Compared to their women, Earth's counterparts appeared barely 'of-age,' with daintier, more fragile frames. It held him and others on edge, despite the selection process being painstakingly robust, one concern lurked over them.

How would these women survive their physical demands?

Any damage would leave them lifelong consequences.

The next few days, he hoped into his sighed breath, would give those answers. Otherwise, the reason they'd allowed it would be for naught. He understood why, Earth had spliced Delta's DNA with their own genetic

sequences, and successfully reversed their weakening male Y-chromosome. Both genders now stood several inches taller, even muscle mass in males had increased when compared to their world history.

He didn't enjoy Earth felt indebted or believed their continued exchange of DNA hinged on saying yes. Delta wouldn't remove their support, though he couldn't ignore if they didn't right this wayward ship, by proxy, the help would end regardless. How could he? Women travelling from Earth to them, it wasn't fair.

He'd say it again—he didn't like it.

But they were clutching at straws.

Ten years.

That's how long they'd fought this foreboding adversary. And while they'd faced a formidable nemesis once before, he couldn't deny, it certainly became the lingering death that'd get the job done. What perhaps felt more taunting was the sinking feeling it'd somehow been their own undoing.

The stifling conversation yanked him from that brink to their next, and his head fell against the black leather meant to offer comfort. The ceiling his new view, he again considered his attendance. Did it matter the skeptics in the room feared this'd dilute their gene pool? Or others who struggled with the whole 'alien breeding' concept. None of it mattered.

He'd already discussed it countless times, now he'd tired of reminding them, their ability to deliver females had been zero for five years.

The only other option.

Do nothing and cease to exist.

It wasn't like they hadn't tried everything else known to both species first, either. When their own technologies failed, they reduced themselves to using Earth's more primitive reproductive methods. IVF, IUI, donor eggs, day five embryos, even surrogates, and yet despite this, nothing worked. Unlike their bartering companions, who adapted to Delta's gene pool perfectly, they couldn't get a female blastocyst past day five.

Nothing worked.

Not a damn thing.

More sighs broke free, riding the lump he'd barely cleared from his throat. It seemed the art of fertilisation, and their Deltarian bodies rejected any invasion to the customary process of conception. He'd have grinned if it wasn't so grim. Their existence hinged on sex—old fashioned and traditional.

And, yet, it still mightn't work.

He trailed his line of sight towards the down-lights over the table, as the discussion around him accosted his ears at varying depths. Justifiable, he sighed, their entire planet struggled under tremendous pressure, and while most were officials on other continents, they knew... Knew these women weren't the first in a long conveyer belt from Earth, and he'd lost count reminding them...

They had to walk before they ran.

He understood their fears, for they were rife in him. So, it was no surprise his pen came under further fire, striking his paperwork alongside the growing agitation in the room. In revolt, he slunk further into his chair, and his muscles protested for the millionth time. This had, without question, become the second biggest threat his world ever faced.

Their dedicated planning had consumed his life for the last two years. A necessary and unwelcome evil. Evil. Yes, evil, his planet hung by a thread. It caused many to reconsider the fight, perhaps accepting their fate instead.

If that happened...

He'd live the last of his life at his old post, the one he preferred.

Perhaps what churned his unease, he too, held little hope it'd work, and he pinched his eyes shut, sick to death of the ceiling. It'd never happen as the third highest ranking officer in the programme.

Truthfully, until the end came, none of them did.

More of his grunts cleared the sinking reality stuck in his throat. Why wasn't his boss, Operation Chief Boyden Hassat, or Commander and Chief, President of the Planet Falden Xavyin not there? With how close they rode to doomsday, didn't it demand an audience with them too? Should he just call Falden? They were old friends and all. It wasn't fair he suffered in silence, alone. He wasn't cut out for this behind the desk lark like them.

Perhaps he should demand his old post back? It wouldn't be hard, he still struggled going from Military Planet Commander to overseeing their civilisation's survival in the most unorthodox of ways. Give him a Star-Base or Warship, and an army any day. He'd only agreed to his current role on the firm understanding it'd be a temporary post. But their nightmare continued, and his plan of returning seemed to slip from his grasp.

Another grunt, and he shifted his legs until they became taut under his restrictive suit pants. Now he growled. Damn-it, could he just leave? They probably wouldn't even notice, he'd barely spoken as it was.

If only.

He looked at the dark cherry-red wooden boardroom doors. They teased back, reminding him his reality was firmly stuck there. He understood why. His friend Falden appointed him to get them over the line, but it failed to abut the dissatisfaction he contended with daily...

Stuck in a bloody suit.

Behind a damn desk.

The closest he actually came to action was governing the size of women on Earth. While he enjoyed the change of scenery, it hadn't been difficult, ensuring women were on the fuller and taller side of Earth's population curve.

Not short of male applications either, it humbled him they'd mostly stepped forward for the right reasons. They too, held strict guidelines. Had to. They'd be in intimate contact with women who were both strangers, but also smaller than what Deltarian men were accustomed to.

He closed his eyes again, everything hinged on their ability to stop should the situation escalate into a forced cessation. That type of restraint he couldn't ignore, commanded a particular kind of man, one that'd guided their decisions.

Procreation still flooded desires.

Inflamed a biological release between two bodies.

Pitiful as it was, it'd been what gave him relief the women arriving today would be treated with the utmost of respect and consideration. He whole heartedly believed their processes found them outstanding moral principles, and sound ethical behaviour. All except for one. Alyster Berkinsdale—the damn president's pain in the backside nephew. It ate at him, his friend couldn't say no to his wife.

This was serious.

No playing—no joking.

Their planet sat on the brink, and the man in charge had given into the persistence of his wife and her family. Alyster had no business being on the male procreation task-force. Where was that young man during planet wide recruits to save their world the last time?

That's right.

Hiding in his uncle's bunker.

Though rare on Delta, there was no refuting Alyster was a ruthless brute, wanting to indulge in an overabundance of sex. And while that in itself wasn't a bad thing, given their heightened libido compared to Earth. Alyster's behaviour raised serious questions over the consensual nature of

his actions. Back channels reported scrubbed intel Alyster had been beyond aggressive. He'd gone to hell and back trying to find concrete evidence, but forget scrubbed, anything pertaining to Alyster's indiscretions was snuffed from existence.

The only reason he let it go, well, allowed others to believe he had, the questionable man hadn't been selected for the delicate Earth trial. Women were a fairer sex for a reason, their bodies demanded respect from men—period. They deserved to be treated like goddesses, no matter the reason for intimacy.

It was a sentiment held by nearly all men on Delta.

His body yanked him from the rabbit-hole, reminding him of his current predicament.

Angry.

Annoyed and frustrated, demanding he stand despite being stretched out. Fortunately, or not, his mind rampantly fought to haul himself back in the opposite direction towards the incessant background chatter.

It'd become a lethal mix.

Standing would lead to moving.

Moving would lead to walking out.

And walking would lead straight to where his thoughts were.

Which that losing battle remained firmly rooted in finding how the women's arrival this morning went. It rippled frustration under his skin at not being there, instead stuck on his rear as a pincushion, stabbed with questions the room already knew the answers to.

He had the right to be annoyed, he'd personally interviewed those five women. Was it wrong he wanted to be a familiar face? After two arduous years, sifting through relentless answers of surrogate requirements, because if his rules of over twenty-five, and none naïve or virgins weren't adhered to... Fortunately, the ones he'd chosen were well-rounded. They were even blessed previous pregnancies were welcomed. One was bringing her child.

Relief rushed in cooling his heated temper, thoughts of them on Delta soil helped. No, his persistent need to comfort their nerves wasn't true. He wanted to feel it from them.

That comfort he rationalised would be in how accommodating they'd been, and how completely unlike the women from his planet they were. It wasn't just physical differences. Deltarian women wore hardened warrior personalities, despite men treating them like queens. But these women were

different. Soft and gentle in the gracious feminine air they held. Just being in their presence drowned you in their sensual exquisiteness.

It shuddered a chill down his spine. While he'd never indulged on Earth, mixing recon with pleasure. He often wondered now he'd returned to home soil, what it'd feel like to lay with their divine beauty.

Those women...

Were a cut above. When faced with the stark reality of the truth being asked of them, they'd taken it in their stride. His grin grew, the sparkle dancing in their eyes, glimmered like a precious stone. Not unlike them, when told their 'only consolation,' if they continued, was their choice of mate from detailed data sheets and photos. Now, he wondered if they hadn't seen it as a consolation at all, but rather a 'prize.' Given the time he'd spent with them, the naysayers in the boardroom were wrong. Earth women wouldn't dilute their gene pool. If anything, they'd be adding an incredible amount of subtle feminine power that Delta had lost.

If it worked.

He wasn't the only one in awe, either. His government had given the women automatic planetary citizenship, the right to stay, raise any children they conceived with full financial support.

It was those grateful offerings that left him and others grateful both civilisations lived in similar ways. Truthfully, he found solace in bringing these gentle women to Delta, where they'd live without war between countries. And what of space travel? They had to be dangling carrots, didn't they?

Another sigh—another frustration.

If they couldn't handle their new life, they could return with the children they'd had, which would land them back at square one. But their consideration remained paramount in every decision made.

Again, his body screamed its disdain yanking him from his wayward thoughts, still staring at those doors. A strained grin caught his taut jaw, they'd spared nothing. From renovated apartments to accommodate their smaller frames, to the stunning sky-bridge between the five-story apartment complex to the facility designed to save their planet. It's where the women were escorted to after arriving at the Space Station this morning, and he, remained on the opposite side, neck deep in paperwork, at these damn meetings, and in a bloody suit he hated.

Could he leave? His watch said 3:05 p.m. The continued banter suffocated worse than a torture chamber, than a room designed to strategize

their survival. It hadn't eluded him, however, at least half of the twelve men and women in the boardroom, and half the virtual counterparts, were now sharing his misery.

Now a quiet chuckle left his mouth, that meant this meeting would wind down. It had too, at 4 p.m., his final one was with the five men the Earth women had chosen. He'd become beyond eager to find if the matches would work. Not physically, but personally. Any aversion to their choices would instantly forego anything reproductive, under no circumstances was any woman to be coerced or forced.

The raised voices booming through the boardroom from other planetary heads of state threatened to unshackle his temper, which was no mean feat. Though the more their words thundered in, their interrogation for ETAs on results demanded his confirmation, fast followed by their bickering over Earth women to their own shores despite knowing he didn't have those answers.

Almost as if his prayers were answered, their tirades and quabbling side-tracked them, offering him reprieve for the umpteenth time. It's also why it took him minute before the soft tap on his shoulder shifted his awareness, and he swung his head while straightening his ungentlemanly slouched posture.

As he reset, he leant towards the boardroom secretary, whose flushed expression and hunched position made her whispered words hard to hear. "Can you please repeat that?"

"Sorry to interrupt Commander Faulkner. Dr. Smythe has requested you see him in room E1204. He insists he needs your, umm... Specific services, immediately."

Now he understood her flushed appearance, 'specific services' was code used by some women when referring to the intimate dance of repopulation sex. "Thank-you, ma'am." He kept his eyes on her lips in case she answered. She did not. Instead straightened, adjusting her tight knee-length skirt still attempting to hide her embarrassment from the entire boardroom.

The echo of doors rattling as one closed gave him pause for thought. She'd given him an out, but the reason baffled his commonsense. He'd already updated 'the list' of males a million times, and the only remaining programme trial involved the women from Earth.

What the hell had happened?

A hard swallow stuck in his throat. Had something gone worse than wrong? Not just that nightmare, he'd not applied for 'specific services.' In

fact, he'd taken himself off, removing his name had become a daily ritual of sorts. Sure, he'd done it in his past, but currently he'd been held hostage up to his eyeballs in these goddamn bloody meetings.

And why E Block? 'Specific services' never took place there, unless absolutely necessary. Those problems, he could count on one hand, not only in the ten years since he'd been requested to join the male list, but also in the four since becoming the Procreation Director. That area housed examination rooms for routine testing, diagnostic exploration, ultrasounds, and the new compatibility labs.

The few rooms they'd dedicated for those extremely rare cases where the intimate act itself had to be monitored, via diagnostic electrodes over the woman's hips, weren't done in E1204. Those rooms had been abandoned so long ago, they'd become storage.

And with absolute certainty, he knew no such complications existed. If it was a situation that required further attention between the pairing, she wouldn't have used 'specific services.'

The vagueness equally intrigued him as it perplexed. Perhaps the secretary misunderstood the message. Did it matter? It was his responsibility to find out, and it pulled his grin into a smirk as he echoed his freedom. "Excuse me, ladies and gentleman. I have an urgent matter I must attend to."



## CHAPTER 2

He made quick work of the ten-minute trip from the boardroom to E1204, eager to gain answers before his concern escalated. Despite his attempts, the closer he got he couldn't shake it'd been merely his prayers being answered, freeing him from that tedious meeting.

And now outside that white ominous door, his breath heaved after the speed he'd raced. Damn-it, not the look he'd been going for and closed his eyes, sucking in a breath as he adjusted his damn suit before knocking. He considered waiting, but that unease wouldn't, and he entered.

Two steps.

That's all he managed before finding the scene to his right, causing the door to slam shut behind him.

Petite.

Naked.

And young...

The poor woman was shackled to the double hospital type bed with a breathable gag in her mouth, and an opaque white sheet her only modesty. Another horrific lump formed in his throat. Just who on Delta was she, and why the hell was she there? Possibilities railroaded with reckless ferocity as disbelief washed over him, and he had to take another glance.

The second she came into better view, his stomach churned on its empty self. If he had to guess, her age landed somewhere between eighteen and twenty. Not a woman, not even close. Her strawberry blonde hair, thick and wild, matched someone who'd won a ten-round bout, and he cleared that

stuck lump from his throat at the state of her opponent. But it came right back when her glare questioned him, and he held zero wonder those cage-fight ready, piercing blue eyes were reading her next victim. He, however, got caught in their dark topaz web as Dr. Tellen Smythe rushed to face him.

The rush of air cleared what still loitered in his throat and what stole his breath. Now aware he'd received the wrong message, he'd convey a savage one of his own. Delta never treated a female this way, yet alone one so young. It thrust his pointed finger towards her as their eyes met again. And yet, despite their stunning beauty and her expression, it didn't lessen his bellowing disdain bouncing off the walls. "Tellen! I was told specific services! And She, looks neither consenting, nor old enough. What the Hell! Is going On!" His lungs became desperate for air, while his other hand gripped his hip. "There'd better be a bloody good explanation why she's bound and gagged. You Hear Me! A bloody good one!"

Her gaze cast towards the two men, more specifically the one that'd just entered. He seemed different. It wasn't the tailored navy suit and tie, oddly similar to those men visiting home before a friend was taken. It wasn't even his missing white coat that'd bombarded her since waking in this strange place.

No, he seemed mad.

Livid even.

She considered it made his stature resemble an angry bear, and far more intimidating than the man beside him, or the ones that left after she'd hurt half of them. She already felt small, now she felt tiny.

Her fear reminded her...

Different didn't mean safe.

And when she caught the storm brewing in his deep blue eyes nearly matching his suit, and his brown hair styled like in those magazines they snuck back home, became unkempt from his fisted hand, she prepared for more of the same. Or, could it be?

Her mind then argued he appeared mad seeing her tied up, with a thing in her mouth stopping her talking, and biting. It made him the first. No one else seemed to care, but he did. It settled what swirled in her chest, giving rise to trust in him that none of the others deserved. Maybe he spoke English too? That way, she'd find out what'd happened. Until now, she hadn't understood a single word they said.

Tellen blew out his breath while leaning against the wall to their right. "She arrived on the Earth transporter, apparently wheeled to this room

unconscious. She's age appropriate. We checked via bone density scanning, she's twenty-five, give or take a year or two." He paused when the still angry Commander might go against Operations Chief Hassat. "This was the only information we were given..." Another sigh pushed out against the heavy air, waiting for the Commander to either end the discussion, read the note, or roll heads.

## Known Hyper-ovulation. Enjoy.

Tellen waited for the Procreation Director to decide his next move. It happened to be tearing the note in their language from his hand. "Do you know what that means?"

His eyes drifted towards the woman, unable to fathom how a note could ever justify her treatment. "Tellen I'm NOT playing! We need to untie her. This isn't right! I won't have the whole damn thing come undone because of this kind of behaviour. It'll be our undoing—you hear me!"

"Commander Faulkner, wait... Read the note." Tellen extended his hand cautiously in case the Director moved from reading it a million times. "Do you know what this means?"

His seething anger didn't care. "No, I don't. Not sure it exists in our vocabulary, but it's irrelevant, she deserves to be unbound and let go." He knew he'd be told anyway and returned his gaze to the tiny woman. Her expression marked someone willing to die for her freedom, and that needed to change.

"It means she releases multiple ovum per cycle. It increases the chances of what Earth call a multiple pregnancy." Intrigued by the notion, Tellen had been in discussion with her planet's designated medical contacts, finding out what he could.

"What! You mean—multiple at once, does that even exist?" His attention darted back to Tellen, to gauge the truth behind the man's statement.

"Yes. Apparently, it's frequent on Earth. I've been in contact with them. Come to the office, I'll show you the data they sent." Tellen turned his back on the Commander, which spiked his concern given he'd not untied the woman. But he advanced alongside the wall he'd leaned on towards the office door at the end.

His gaze refocused on her as hers followed the doctor. By the time he refocused, Tellen was waiting beside the door, and he rolled his shoulders,

taking quick large strides until he stood astride in the doorway. He ignored Tellen's bolt inside the office rustling through the paperwork, and he gazed in her direction, his temper again flaring dangerously close to creating chaos.

The longer his eyes remained on her, he became determined to roll heads over her treatment. She'd bent her knees to rest her head against them, and although facing his direction, her eyes had pinched shut as she rocked for comfort. The sight tightened his chest, constricting his lungs, this wasn't right, he had to untie her and remove that bloody gag.

"Wait... What are you doing?" Tellen's voice trembled through the space, he didn't need another injury added to the growing list.

"I'm going to release her. It's cruel! And Not how we treat Women!"

"I wouldn't do that." Tellen paused as he extended his arm. "She's only bound because she's a danger to others. She's apparently broken one doctor's nose from a kick. Another had his face clawed and required the chamber. A third had a massive chunk of skin bitten off his forearm. And that's just the doctors! I don't recommend releasing her, unless you want to get hurt."

"Bloody Hell! That only confirms zero consent—doesn't it? Which begs the question, why am I here? And why aren't her legs bound if she's that dangerous, so you can at least sedate and properly release her, without injuring anyone? You know her treatment isn't right!" His temper teetered on rabid hearing her suffering during her short time on Delta, and yet, a sense of pride bloomed at her fighting spirit.

"Because no one wants to risk a court martial with self-defence as their—well... Defence. Come check out this data, I'll explain why you're here." Tellen ignored the consent comment. He'd never win that one. The Commander was the one who developed those procreation laws.

He wanted her suffering to end, her delicate size shouldn't be restrained like a captured warrior. If her freedom hinged on Tellen getting whatever off his chest, fine. And so, he marched the half-dozen steps back to the office.

His chest was accosted with gynaecological ultrasounds and reports by Tellen, he couldn't quite believe what he read. Could it be true? It'd never happened on his planet. Ten years of active monitoring history, not one, let alone multiple pregnancy. "Bloody hell. It's incredible, who knows about this?"

"Far as I know, Hassat, and the President."

Back standing in the doorway, he glanced at the woman and sighed, it didn't matter. She needed untying and release. Her bound, wild state proved

she hadn't consented, now a victim trying to survive. "We need to free her and send her home. She's not meant to be here."

"Hassat. He disagrees. Believes she's a gift to help us."

"A gift! No! That's absurd, you know it must be consensual, there's laws for a reason!"

"I'm aware, Commander Faulkner. But Hassat—"

"What does Falden say!" his tone growled, not for a split second believing his friend of forty years would agree to her barbaric treatment. "Hassat is wrong! IF anything she'll be a temptation of forbidden fruit. Earth is testing us, see if we take a bite. It'll give them the wrong impression."

Tellen had forgotten the President, and Commander were childhood friends. That small detail everyone knew but rarely spoke about. He'd have to come clean, not knowing what'd been said, only relayed. "Apparently, the President's aware."

"I'm going to call him. Her treatment is reprehensible, and whoever shackled her should be put in prison: on Earth, this is not how we treat Women!"

Tellen needed things back on track, the orders were unwavering. Hasset wanted results, and a call by 4 p.m., otherwise he'd send who everyone knew wouldn't care for her well-being, but couldn't pin anything on, to get the job done. And he couldn't guarantee the Commander could contact the President before the deadline. "Commander Faulkner, wait..." His voice then softened at the Procreation Director's narrow glare burning him alive. It'd only go one of two ways, and he preferred the less violent path. "She's close to ovulation, see, look. She has three ova."—he pointed towards the most recent ultrasound in the Commander's hand—"over the next four-to-six hours they'll release. Hassat stated he's gained permission for an attempted impregnation. You're the preferred candidate. Hence, specific services. If you decline, Berkinsdale will be given the task. Apparently, he's wanting it completed by 4 p.m., and it's nearly twenty past three. Shall I just call Alyster?"

"Like Bloody Hell You're letting that monster near this woman! And Who the Hell made me preferred candidate!" His voice roared under the swirling rage, demanding to end more than just her suffering.

Tellen leapt back a step, catching the Commander's temple jackhammer as it pulsed. He'd be lying if it didn't unnerve him, the man might be the Procreation Director, but he'd been a bare fist military killer first. "Look... All I know is Hassat's directive. You're first choice on the list,

Berkinsdale's second. Whether it's solely Hassat's, the Presidents or a mutual decision, I don't know, just don't shoot the messenger."

"This is so Bloody Wrong! We're tainting the programme and deserve to fail if we do this—You hear me!" His gruff and menacing tone caught her attention as words violently flew from his mouth in her direction. What surprised him, there wasn't an ounce of fear in her stunning eyes, or expression, just ready for her next fight, and by god she looked battle ready.

Her gaze narrowed on the loud, angry voice from the navy suit man. It didn't frighten her, even with its escalating tempo. And his continued gaze at her, she hoped meant he was organising her release, maybe even telling them off, because she couldn't ignore the rising uncertainty as suspicion over her predicament bubbled under the surface. There'd be no way of knowing how long she could continue fighting them before exhaustion claimed her or the men became ten-foot giants.

Tellen let the silence fall as their Commander gathered his thoughts, ones that made him the best on the planet. When he caught the large sigh slumping the Director's shoulders, he too understood. It was an unfortunate means to an end, and showed just how hard the decision was, but Hassat wanted answers, which meant he'd achieve it by any means necessary.

Tellen jolted in surprise when their Commander darted into the room, nearly knocking him over. It entered his mind he'd soon be clobbered to death and the Commander would kidnap the woman, and he briefly closed his eyes, unsure what to expect. Fortunately, the Commander had begun ransacking the sole full-height cabinet housing old tech in the corner.

He shot a glance at his watch, 3:22 p.m. Damn-it. "Where are the two-way communicators? And what's her name?"

"We only have one-ways here, I'm afraid. We haven't used this room in years, and according to the Delta wristband, it's Sarah Ascot. Why do you want one?"

"Damn-it! If, and I mean IF... I'm going to do this. I want to reassure her as much as possible. I'm going to force myself on her in the most intimately private way, it'll forever change her, and not for the better. It won't end well for anyone, myself included, but I can't let Alyster do it. The guilt would outweigh breaking my own moral code, or going to prison!" Finding what he'd upended the cabinets for, he closed his hand around the damn thing, followed by his eyes as he lowered his head.

Could he do it?

Could he live with the consequences?

Back in the doorway, he stalled, looking at her solemn state. How could this be happening? He shook that from his thoughts as he strolled to face his own demise. Each step slow and calculated, careful not to alarm or reinstate her fight. At the bed's side, his stomach knotted as he softened his posture, lowered his head, raising his eyebrows to reduce his towering size that had to feel threatening.

Not taking his eyes off her either, determined not to be blindsided and convey his genuine intention, he didn't particularly wish to add his name to the list of casualties. Half sitting on the bed in case he needed to shift fast, he began lifting his arms in a slow, deliberate motion towards her until she startled. He ceased all movement, offering her a gentle smile, relaying he was no threat.

Her senses hummed with the smell of his aftershave, strong and masculine, but oddly comforting, and nothing like the men who'd been in her space since waking. The soft expression taking over his face, led by his gentle smile, reassured her fractious state. Though, did his handsome features help hide his threat?

Somehow feeling safer, she offered a smile back. He hadn't lunged at her, and in truth he appeared to be helping, so threw caution into the wind, allowing him to continue, hoping it didn't cause her demise.

He took her stillness as her understanding he'd not inflict anything she'd endured thus far, least he hoped while shifting her hair from her neck. Caught by its soft texture as it slipped through his fingers, its lavender aroma intoxicated his senses, and he came under fire from his body, stirring his loins. Damn. It spelt trouble.

He didn't want to continue now so close to her. Something about her essence sat beyond measure, fighting his mind at the orders handed down to him. It didn't seem fair as he placed the communicator, knowing she'd feel a pinch. Would it descend her into chaos at the sharp but brief pain, last thing they needed was her war dance.

She jolted at its placement behind her ear, cursing betrayal through her veins, she'd allowed him closer, and now her neck hurt. What had he done? Was she about to hurt more, or worse, die? The bundling fear demanded she escape at all costs. He was no different than the others.

On the precipice of the fight of her life despite her shackles, an awareness simmered that her pain subsided, replaced with his warm hand stroking her forearm. His fingers caressing with the barest of touch somehow soothed her fight. Who was he? How did he manage that? Did she hope he wasn't sinister like the rest?

He'd not learnt all Earth's languages, and while knowing hers would've helped, they just didn't have time. Above all else, she deserved at the very least to understand theirs. Long after she'd settled, he found his hand still stroking her arm. It calmed his own rage, almost, he couldn't believe no one had bothered to place one. As her posture softened, he hoped his contact helped quieten her.

It was also an introduction to his touch.

His stomach turned green, knowing soon he'd be forced to do more... Unless he could change it.

With that foreboding knowledge and the ever-ready risk she presented, he leaned in with a soft smile. "Hello Sarah, my name's Sebastian."

Her body bolted upright, sparked by confusion thundering through her ears to her mind. She'd understood him. But How? For the first time since arriving, she understood their words. He'd helped her understand.

That sealed her thoughts.

She could trust him.

The clear anger she'd been tied up, his comforting touch, and now making sure she understood. She allowed her apprehension caging itself to meet his eyes.

Safe.

With him, she was somewhat safe.

An uncomfortable tension rode his concerns when her intense stare met his gaze. Her ever-ready fire beckoned with utter destruction, kept him walking a razor's edge, but she'd somewhat relaxed against his touch. It drove carnal signals to the one place it shouldn't. He pleaded to revolt against the arousal, the need to feel her, instead he should be valiantly trying to protect her. He had to push it aside as he met her leant in frame. "I'll be right back."

Tellen thought his eyes had deceived him. How could the Commander be in such close proximity to her without mortal injury? Nor could he believe she'd settled around him. If he hadn't seen it himself, he'd never have believed the softness spreading across her face as they both leant towards each other. Her eyes still held the steely glare of a fighter, but she'd notably relaxed and responded to the Commander in a way seen between lovers.

That's when Tellen understood the Commander wasn't just any procreation member. No wonder the President appointed him as Director, his compassion and consideration for women was above even most Deltarian men. Still shocked, the Commander had made her feel safe. By god, he'd love to understand how, it'd saved several injuries. And despite the Procreation Director removing himself from 'the list,' he found himself grateful the President kept secretly putting him back on. "Does this mean you'll do it?"

"Don't really have a choice, do I... It's a case of walking out, knowing the destruction that'll befall her. Or... Sacrifice my own morals and at least ease her suffering as much as I can." Bile bit at the back of his throat, it sounded beyond horrific out loud.

After his hellish nightmare was over, his old friend was getting a rather abrupt call. Not only was he resigning, wanting no part of what Delta had become, he'd also be walking from his oldest confidant. How could his friend hand him such an evil ultimatum? No worse, the President had chosen his nephew as backup.

Delta was no longer his home, no longer the strong morally encompassed civilisation he'd once cherished and risked his life fighting to save. After this, his shuttle and the vast nothingness of space would be his new home. Lord, he just wanted to run, maybe he should. Take her back to Earth first. Bloody forcing her—a woman! It was such an unspeakable act. It unshackled his need to kill, he had the skill-set for it.

He clutched the neck of his tie, trying to refocus and get some air. "Have you done a scope profile? She looks far too petite to accept our larger male anatomy?"

"No, only the bone scan, ovary ultrasound, and placing the diagnostic/procreation monitor-electrodes before whatever they'd drugged her with wore off. You're going in blind, I'm afraid."

More grunts flew from his mouth, his nightmare was going from bad to worse, and he seriously considered just going to war and taking her home? It sounded more viable than doing what'd ruin her—ruin them both.

Why not?

Either way, he'd be a criminal.

"Damn-it Tellen! Don't you think it should've been the first thing you checked? I won't hurt or damage her. No one will—you hear me! I'm not afraid to kill. Heck! I should just go on a rampage with what you're demanding! It's

just so wrong. I just can't believe Falden ever agreed to this!" He fisted his hair, failing to find oxygen.

"I don't know who gave the orders, remember?" Tellen watched his Commander's struggle fall into hell. Now grateful it was him and not Mr. Berkinsdale. The terror, pain, and damage she'd endure under that brute's unforgiving hand, he realised he couldn't live with either. Her tormented screams through thickened walls despite no windows, and the soundproof doorway the Commander was currently standing in, would've probably cost him his lunch as he vomited, his career at being involved with so much destruction, and probably his life. Because the Commander was right. The guilt would eat you alive. And he just hoped the Director didn't change his mind.



# CHAPTER 3

\*DISCLAIMER DUBIOUS CONSENT\*

Pain consumed his chest as he sucked in a vacant breath, gazing towards the small woman who now lay on her side. Her eyes squared on him, watching his every move, likely trying but failing to hear their discussion. That pain constricted tighter, knowing she was unaware of the fate soon to befall her.

That alone begged he stop this before it killed them both. But until he'd spoken with Falden, he'd have to keep reminding himself her tiny frame had nothing to do with her age. She appeared barely five-foot four while he towered over her at six-foot eight like a gym junkie, and the closer he inched, his soul repelled what'd been demanded of him.

It was undeniable the suffering he was about to inflict. She didn't deserve it, no woman did. But he also couldn't deny her soft delicate skin, and unassuming beauty unlike any he'd ever laid eyes on before, continued to get under his skin. Under normal circumstances, he'd have considered getting to know her better. Maybe interview her, assess her suitability for the program. Hell, who was he kidding 'consider?'

Total lie.

He'd go back on 'the list' just for her.

But the brutal reality would leave her fearful of him until her last breath. He'd never get near her again, heck, probably the same planet. In truth, he'd have to sedate her, send her home, and force his government to cover a lifetime of therapy just so she could be in the company of men without falling apart.

Torn to shreds by the impending ruination, he lowered his head on slumped shoulders while reluctantly placing his phone, wallet, and watch beside Tellen on the desk. More angst dried his throat, forming a destructive mass at the need for words. “Maintain audio. I have a feeling it’ll become a minefield.” He didn’t bother making eye contact as he shut the office door, but a hard swallow met with the heavy air hearing the door to E1204 lock.

Each step towards the most captivating woman he’d ever met, and his impending demise knotted his stomach in on itself. Agitation also joined the battle swirling in his gut at being reduced to using the lighting strategy reserved for war. “Lights... Dim to fifteen percent.” Certain his heart skipped out momentarily as the auto system accepted his command. Yet, if it soothed her wild behaviour, he’d accept it, she was already going to be damaged enough after his invasion.

He came to stand on the bed’s right side, beside the medical drawers, his eyes never leaving her slight form. As she rolled to face him, she offered a gentle smile, knocking pain in his chest while enticing other parts of him that should remain dormant. But her eyes, brighter than the stars they flew through, he hoped they wouldn’t lose their sparkle, or his despicable act break that fighting spirit.

She still sensed she could trust him as he came in closer, so didn’t try fighting him. His soft smile invited the calmness washing over her to grow, despite that other man lurking behind that door. Did he have good news? Perhaps not when his expression grew pained—haunted almost as their eyes remained deadlocked. Was he going to cart her off somewhere else?

Maybe not, and her head tilted at his movement, which was nothing beyond dipping an inch. She then saw his shoes and socks as they landed on the frosted glass cabinets behind him. Then came his suit jacket and vest, his eyes never leaving her. His fixation burned hotter than any sunny day in the garden. Her thoughts drifted to why he was taking them off, other than his intense stare, it wasn’t hot.

Next she watched his tie land on the growing pile, his shirt fast following behind. Her eyes darted open seeing his taut, muscled torso, sculptured like a statue she’d once glimpsed in a magazine. His body rippled as he shifted nothing like what she imagined the tubby men who more rolled than walked around home.

Her attention darted towards his arms, flexing while he ran his hands through his hair. The bulging skin flexed as every muscle chiselled harder

into that stone. What did he do differently to the monk cloth wearing men at home? His back when he turned, equally caught her attention until he swung to face her and his chest remained rigid with the power it possessed.

It held a kind of magic, keeping her spellbound and distracted, she barely noticed his hands landing on his belt. Why was he still undressing?

Bone chilling. That'd be his only way to describe the sensation thundering down his spine. He'd have said something felt off, only it somehow understated the corner he'd been backed into. Her behaviour wasn't normal for a woman who'd had sex. Was she acting coy to unnerve him more than he already was? Because it was sure as hell working. "Something's wrong Tellen. It's like she's—she's innocent of the intimacies between men and women!" She unnerved him into his next life when her head tilted. Wrong wasn't right, it'd become worse.

"You have to push through, Commander. There's no time left, I'm positive Berkinsdale will be nearby just waiting for 4 p.m." Tellen knew he'd be lurking if rumours were right.

She didn't quite understand 'intimacies between men and women.' What did it mean? And who was this Berkinsdale character? Should she fear them too, or were they her saviour?

Her thoughts vaporised alongside her breath, bulging her eyes equally hard as his flexed arms worked to remove his underwear. She'd not seen a naked man before, and though the lights were dimmed, it did nothing to hide the long, thick piece of flesh squarely planted between his legs.

Too late she realised her panicked distraction had her miss his slow advancement, now under the same sheet beside her. Another erupting frenzy surged to the surface, demanding she fight, and used what little freedom her arms still had, aiming her claw prepped fingers, to tear any skin she could reach on his face. To double down, her legs aimed forceful kicks in his direction, not caring where her feet landed.

Though his chest wasn't in her firing line, it felt punched with what weighed heavy in his chest. He didn't want her to fear him, despite what he had to do. It wasn't fair, only one path lay ahead. One he had to act on sooner rather than later. And he blew out a heavy sigh across her hair as he placed himself over her, convincing himself it'd limit the damage capable by her legs.

Those arms were a different story, though, and while he now understood her restraint, it still wasn't fair. She was only trying to protect herself. At first he considered leaving them, but the closer they inched, she'd

reduced him to holding them above her head, but took the moment to whisper when her body refused its new position. “Please don’t fight me, everything will be okay.” He cast his gaze to hers, knowing the hollowness lacing his words. Sure enough, the wild he’d been warned had kicked it up a notch. And his disdain blew his heavy breaths across her skin at the unfolding nightmare. “If you don’t settle down, you’ll force me to strap your legs, and that’s something neither of us want.”

It knotted his gut beyond measure when her body remained tense underneath him, making continuing harder than his next breath. Why again cycled—why Berkinsdale a civilian of all men? No, it didn’t matter, as Commander he’d never request a subordinate to undertake a mission he’d not do himself. But either side this fell on.

It was wrong.

How—just how?

Time, he reminded himself and with a gentle pressure, coaxed her thighs open with his own, placing himself between her. Her fight resumed as she pushed back into the bed, wildly kicking. He did his best to ignore her attempts, petite as she was, she became less of a match in his position. In his defence, even if she posed a mortal risk, he’d never pin her down further.

Not in this lifetime.

Or any other.

But she could still hurt herself thrashing around, and he couldn’t lay firmer, he’d crush her. “Sarah, please stop. I don’t want to bind your legs, but I will if you leave me no choice. Everything will be okay. I don’t want to hurt you.” His head lowered off her fiery gaze as she stilled, his command of her body should never be like this.

Fear told her to both fight and obey—just be smarter about it. Despite wanting to trust his words, he now lay naked over her. His invasion ranked worse than those men she woke to loitering between her legs with hands and what felt like metal; his body completely covered were they once were. Skin against skin. Powerless, with her hands secured above her head.

She was stuck.

What happen to her now—more metal? Or worse?

Would he keep his word and not hurt her, could she trust him?

Before she’d had the chance to calm her anxious fears, his weight shifted, and his right hand traced down her stomach, pausing at her navel. Her breath collapsed when it then turned fingers first to meet between her legs.

Instincts overrode her motionless state, and she resumed her fight against being pinned down.

Her anger beckoned.

How dare he!

It couldn't be happening!

"It's okay. Just relax..." Though his words whispered across her hair, he wasn't sure they worked.

What remained of her conscious state stilled alongside her body when he continued brushing the outside of two bent fingers against her private flesh. Each stroke from top to bottom barely noticeable until he increased in pressure with each pass he made. Her plans of attack started drifting on clouds in slow motion with his rhythm until his presence no longer raged like an intrusion, but something she couldn't name. What had he done? A strange aching throb tickled deep within her abdomen, hiding behind where he continued to stroke.

Confusion rode those rising foreign waves.

She'd say somehow natural—no, magic maybe?

He sucked in a reluctant breath as she relaxed under his touch before inviting her soft folds to open with his thumb and forefinger. It wrecked him, he couldn't savour the exquisiteness of her, not just for orders, but when her hips bucked at his violation. No, somehow wrecked understated his ruination, and he leant against her cheek, desperate to soothe her. "Sarah, everything's okay. Please, just relax." She still struggled underneath him, and he hated himself for having to continue, starting with a gentle tempting, his thumb soft against her clit caressed as it moved alongside her protests.

She hated he'd entered her most private parts. So, he hadn't been rough, nor did it hurt—but he'd not asked first. Not just that, she struggled with the strange ways her body was responding with weird fluttery feelings where he touched.

Her head barked they fight till the death for freedom, but her body sunk into a throbbing radiating in a fiery heat from between her legs, wanting more, wanting him closer. It subdued her urgency to fight, buckling under the pressure of what now scared her more, something she couldn't understand.

He'd take the small relief she'd softened against his touch, her delicate little bud of flesh hardening as arousal flushed her cheeks, and she opened her thighs further. It was the slightest victory against the heinous crime he'd soon commit.

But if he could make it pleasurable for her.

Surely, she wouldn't hate him worse than death...

Every time the clock reminded him to move on, his disdain cornered him. And that included when his thumb in motion caressed what he wished he could lavish in his mouth while he slid his finger downwards.

Again, she fought him.

And he wondered just how innocent she was?

His conscience tore with wild rabid ferocity when she trembled as his finger came to rest at her entrance, working her hardened little nub until he was certain she'd relax and accept him. "Sarah... Everything will be okay. I need you to calm down."

As the minutes tick tortuously slow, he noticed she accepted his continued probing easier. If anything, she welcomed him a little each time, her arousal, silky and warm, begged for him against his soaked fingers. It kicked in his own primal instincts, prompting his own concerns he'd fail to remain in control and not lose himself in the pleasure being with a woman gave. His erection already fought hard against its own twitching ache.

Lost in desires that would never be, he advanced into the most sacred part of her, feeling her chest groan unexpectedly on his own. He prepped for a fight, but to his disbelief, he found her inner throbs teasing him to come hither. SHIT!

His life stilled.

It all made sense.

His head tilted towards the office door, his dark tone bouncing off the walls. "Tellen! She's a Bloody Virgin! You Hear Me! A Goddamn Bloody Virgin. This has to stop Now!"

"We can't stop. Berkinsdale will take over. Don't know about you, Commander, but—"

"We nothing! I don't want to be involved Full-Stop! Get Hassat on the phone Now!" He removed his touch, meeting her eyes. Now, understanding her plight, he offered the barest of smiles. But as he gazed into those stunning beauties, he was met with a dreamy, hint of sensual awareness gleam. He'd awakened her desires for intimacy, and with absolute certainty he knew behind that gag, hid a smile enticing him to continue.

It tempted him with both a blessing and his curse, and to distract himself, he leant in. But to his bewildering amazement as his cheek grazed hers, she caressed him back with her own. "It's okay Sarah... Everything will be okay."

I understand now.” Her continued nuzzling he rather liked, arguing with his better judgement, who was he to deny her?

“Hassat wants you to continue. Berkinsdale’s keen to take over. Apparently, just say the word.”

He heard the crackled tone in Tellen’s voice through the speaker. It grated his temper back to life.

How could he do this? She was a virgin.

His head lowered, brushing his lips against her shoulder at the gravity of it all, before shifting away from her touch to answer. The separation grated on his temper and his chest, spurring the warrior in him more. “No! I’ll get it done! Get hold of Falden Now! Use my phone if the direct line doesn’t work, code’s 84583. And by now—I mean NOW!”

Silent grunts rode his breath as he shifted back onto his left side, gliding his touch towards her soft, wet, tempting flesh. Met with more than her physical arousal, she didn’t fight him, worse, she opened herself further, wanting his touch. No, devastating, he decided, and it’d soon change to wishing him dead.

It didn’t mean his carnal reaction read the memo as it turned feral, pressing his erection into the bed as it demanded her. He’d become a victim to his own desires, which only deepened his guilt as he shifted against the discomfort, and she startled when her thigh met his erection. It fell further into hell, sending him on a one-way path to purgatory when she offered it a caress of her own, causing a low guttural groan from his chest, startling him, and egging her on more.

With his own restraint under fire, that first ember of control turned to ash. It’d take all he had not to ruin this for her, she’d never handle a full thrust during the heated throes of the moment.

Pulled from that minefield by the ticking clock over his head, he resumed his position, giving her the same tender care. She’d never be ready for him, and it wouldn’t be painless, her hymen was thick and firm against his fingers. Unsure if that was an Earth woman thing, or just a her thing, regardless, it only worsened his position, and he grunted knowing the outcome as the deeper his fingers entered.

New plan.

Treat her like a lover.

Not true. He’d always treated sex that way, but he’d go above and beyond if it eased her suffering.

And as it was by his hand, he let his breath rest against her ear. "This may hurt a little, but it will pass, I promise. There's no way to avoid it. I'm sorry..." Her body trembled into a knotted angst underneath him, sending his heart into some weird arrhythmia. He'd probably killed her arousal, but he owed it to her, she deserved the warning.

Her body enjoyed what he was doing, why did he say that? Why did it have to end? Why did he have to hurt her? He said everything would be okay. That he wouldn't hurt her. Only to say she'd feel pain.

Had he lied?

Fight. That's what every fibre in her being demanded. Get out from underneath him, came second. Her hips bucked as she tried throwing him off balance, bringing her hands down as much as the shackles allowed.

If she hurt him first.

Then maybe she'd be spared from this pain he'd cause.

But instead of making contact, he must've read her thoughts, somehow with that thing he placed on her neck. For no sooner had she reached halfway did he speak to the voice that'd echoed from somewhere earlier, to tighten her restraints. And before those words had settled in the heavy air, something yanked her arms back above her head.

Her breath fled...

She'd been pinned with zero ability to move.

Dread washed over her soul, now defenceless and vulnerable to whatever 'pain' he had planned. If she wasn't so terrified, tears would've found their escape with the only path to freedom. But as it stood, they too were his victims.

She'd use his ignorance to warn her as his downfall, and head-butt him if he came close again. Having survived her life without a scrape, she'd never allow him to inflict pain, and down there to boot. It'd be foolish to believe this was similar as her neck. That held a valid reason, but nothing down there held such necessity.

Until then, she'd continue fighting, starting with her hips, shifting sideways to use her legs as weapons. Only it earned her nothing more than tiredness. No matter how hard she tried, she couldn't evade his probing.

It no longer felt nice, no longer created that strange new feeling, humming as it shot beads of heat through her body. Instead, pure terror engulfed her thoughts of impending pain. Which then gave way as a deepening penetration pulled towards that sensation again and her breath rasped under

the tightening coil between her legs. That changed when the pressure increased, tightening her flesh, until it burned. If he hadn't mentioned pain, she'd have said the rush begged harder. But again he led her down a different path with his thumb and its movement, wilting away her anger, replacing it with one towards herself with how easy she lost the will to fight when he touched her.

It wasn't fair, her body was a traitor.

The burning sensation raged in bonfire fashion, faster and stronger until all awareness other than him melted away. Still hating her body, she now begged for what he did, except for that lurking memory of 'pain.' And when down there became tight and uncomfortable as his second finger went inside her, she again gasped but in silence.

Waiting for a pain that never came.

Had she misunderstood?

It wasn't pain bombarding her senses, suffocating as he controlled her body, rocking against him. The more she felt his flesh against hers, felt him thrust with dedication, she lost herself to the ecstasy taking charge of the intensity building between her legs.

Unable to deny the sensation rippling through her lady-parts, she moved in unison with his gentle advancements, a silent moan riding through the gag as something incredible took over. Unable to chase why her voice had gone, she fell into reckless abandon, riding his fingers until something exploded, spasming into aches, heaving her body into shockwaves that desperately clutched onto him for dear life, until she nosedived into the deepest—darkest...

Panic.

Terror.

Maybe death?

She clung to her sanity, desperate to hold on to what little breath remained. It failed, and everything came undone as her world evaporated into the rapidly rising pressure against her flesh. Hard and fast, its blinding reminder of his 'pain' curdled in a sickening tension in her stomach until her thoughts blurred into the pain. What had he just done?

He'd have growled if it wouldn't scare her senseless. He'd tried his hardest to do that with delicate force. Surely Earth women weren't all like this? Her panic aside, never did he expect it to be that firm, their humanity would've gone extinct eons ago otherwise. It caused his own level of nauseousness as it buckled, which brought bile to his throat feeling a gush of what would be

blood. His only saving, he could reassure her. “Sarah, the worst is over. I promise... Let me take that memory away.”

His thumb moved again with the same gentle caress, hoping she wouldn't be too far gone, he had to encourage her hunger to rise again. It remained his only movement as he allowed her body time to adjust to what he'd not yet removed. He'd be entering himself soon, and he needed her relaxed, for both their sanity.

Still reeling from pain, she couldn't grasp why he'd hurt her, even as it settled, and his voice hit her muddled brain. He wanted to take it away. Wouldn't not doing it to begin with be better? But the pain did drift away as that feeling she enjoyed took centre stage, and she liked that idea. But what if every time she did, that pain came straight after? He'd said take it away, but he'd caused it once, he could do it again. And that—that she didn't want.

How could she trust him now?

It became irrelevant as her body trumped her mind, had it forgotten the agony still aching behind the building hum of that rush? As if he'd read her thoughts again, he'd stilled inside her, allowing her to feel her throbs against his touch. It dragged her under into the abyss of wanting more.

On cue, her traitorous body surrendered to his stroking parts of her she didn't know would feel this way. Why was she so weak to this? How could her body ignore threats of pain? It continued to offer her as a sacrifice to his every whim as her hips relaxed, begging him to continue for what she feared might go beyond hurt a second time.

He was hanging by a thread, thank heavens her need rose quicker, giving him the space to increase his soft and slow thrusting to meet her need. A need, her body pleaded, yearning to be entered with each pass he made. It wasn't fair, he understood her body had taken control, and not her desires, crashing her breasts and hard nipples into his own chest as she gasped. Tortured by her arousal and carnal need to bathe them in attention...

He couldn't.

There just wasn't time.

The clock their ever-present grim reaper.

He, with as much restraint as his own impulses could handle, washed gentle words over her. “That's it Sarah... Let me make you feel good.” Her head nuzzled against his neck, searing a need to care for her, more than any woman before. And in one swift flick, he released her gag with his left arm he used as a lean-to, knowing she'd not hurt him, at least not yet.

She didn't care why he'd removed it, and though he'd blurred her attention with the bliss flooding her body, she showed her gratitude, nuzzling in closer. Her parted lips pressed against the crook of his neck as his aftershave thrust her head back, spiking that feeling higher than before. Her breasts crushed further into his chest, the heat of his skin setting hers alight, and now when her still slient moan escaped on her parted lips, it dragged out his into her neck. Edged closer to a repeat rush by his response, her body sought him out for what felt missing.

Surprise rattled his restraint, nearly spending himself on the sheets at her reaction. She responded like a sexual goddess, one he'd awakened and subsequently teasing every inch of him, and he'd give anything to slow down and show her as it should be. More disbelief, and primal urges thundered through him when he removed his hand, and a distraught emptiness rode her sighs. Which almost became sobs when his body moved, until he shifted his erection against the length of her, he waited for her reaction, expecting to be at least bitten.

He wasn't. She lifted her hips, hungry for more and open without an inch of reservation. Her urges begged for his penetration, even if she didn't understand. Another growl brushed hair from her forehead, he now rode that same edge.

The teasing position presenting him made burying his erection past her slick folds far too easy. Her impatience, or anger, he thought for sure would cause a bite mark when she returned her lips hard against his neck. But no, if he didn't know better—she'd just kissed him.

Still falling down that rabbit-hole, he barely noticed her hips crying out for him to enter. He advanced a smidge, fighting his own urgency allowing it to probe while she came to terms with what came next. The moment her body writhed underneath him, coating with her desire, it told him everything.

And slowly, through gritted teeth...

He advanced himself.

His soft words landed on her cheek. "Just relax, Sarah... Let me take care of you." Would it keep them both sane?

She didn't fight when he put his flesh inside her. While the stretching burned, it wasn't painful, not like before. In truth, her body felt as though it'd found what it'd been searching for, creating something altogether different. Her body fast began to fall into that rush she'd had before, and now her fears had settled, she felt safe—wanted. Not that any of it made sense,

only he somehow made her feel special. Intoxicated by those thoughts, her control turned to dust, thrusting her body towards him.

He'd stopped half-way, not expecting her to take more of him, if anything, he'd been surprised she managed to yield to that much. Besides, it allowed him to steady his own restraint before he took her over the edge again. It proved harder in practice, his teeth grinding against the brink of letting go if she moved, even just an inch with the vise grip her womanhood strangled more than his control with.

Then it happened.

And he couldn't stop her hips thrust until she'd taken the full length of him. What if she'd hurt herself, or worse? If there was any truth to either of those, she showed no signs as her face buried back against his neck, her hips rocking, pleading he satisfy that path to nirvana. The clock echoing over his head also reminded him, and he anchored himself before starting out slow, letting her decide the pace.

Heat soared through him onto her as her womanhood gripped tighter with each crescendoed throb. It worked in his favour, given he couldn't walk that tightrope when she'd begged him to empty alongside her.

Slumped over now spent, he refused to shift off his elbows. Their bodies continued to ache and twitch, savouring their entwined affair. As her head buried deeper, thoughts drifted to her state of mind, before being caught by his own suffering. Could he reduce her trauma more than it already was? "It's okay Sarah... It's all over now. I promise. I'm so very sorry. It'll never happen again."

Fear shunted through her chest. Why? Why apologise for that? Distressed with worry destroyed the feeling he'd created, and she shook her head into the crick of his. Never did she think such magic existed between a man and woman, naked with no space between them. He'd created a sense of protection, of being valued, special. And since waking here—protected.

Her reality now faced a worse fate. He'd never lied, even when it hurt, he'd warned her. Did he regret what he did? She wanted it again—now. Had she done something wrong? Did he not like how it felt with her? For the first time since waking, her erupting tremble came from a different kind of fear. One of never seeing him again.

Unsure why his words caused tension to quiver across her body, or why she shook her head. Didn't matter, not really. Either way, every answer

wrecked his heart that he'd caused the light to fade in those beautiful blue eyes, and broken her spirit.



## CHAPTER 4

The cough in front of him felt an annoying interruption, taking him several minutes before he could acknowledge their presence. He was still inside her, wanting nothing more than to stay lost in her sweet caress. Their bodies were nowhere near ready to give each other up, and rather reluctantly, he turned his head, hearing Tellen's voice.

"Ummm... You can stop. I got hold of the President. He ignored the direct line five times. But your phone, he answered immediately... Ummm, anyway, he didn't give Hassat those orders. I'm sorry, I should've listened to you."

His chest sunk, sighing into her, utterly broken. He couldn't undo it, nothing could. The shattering devastation conveyed just how tormented it'd leave them both. "Tellen it's too late—it's done." His agonising defeat only continued. "Please unshackle her."

"You really think that's wise? She might try hurt you?" Tellen's own guilt took root. He should've listened, should've believed the Commander. In all his years working under his command, he'd never heard the highest-ranking military officer, and one of two most revered men on the planet speak in a harrowing, empty tone. Everyone knew the Commander as fearless - a warrior second to none. Yet, right now. He sounded worse than his return from Cancric, his team all but one—gone.

"Tellen, just do it... It's the least I deserve, after what I've done don't you think?" His tone matched his solemn mood, only looking towards the man momentarily as he conveyed his request.

Tellen kept his focus on the Commander, who returned his attention towards the woman. He maneuvered behind the bed, aware his presence was an intrusion as the Director wanted closer to her. Then he caught her gag had been removed moments before her face buried into his neck. Could it be that feeling was mutual? It gave way to the same understanding, she'd not hurt the Commander. Hopefully, that would extend to him too, and he pressed the quick release button, causing the cuffs to fall away. Unsure who was more shocked when her arms were freed, she coiled herself around the Commander's neck, burrowing in deeper.

His temptation needed no encouragement as she wrapped around him, tilting her hips for more. She was a dangerous combination of enticing another round, and the utter destruction of all he held virtuous as his hunger for her grew, one he could ill afford to act on. It didn't matter she welcomed his desire with one of her own. It shouldn't have happened. He needed to temper the desire, not let it bloom, needing to be considerably softer than the temptation she kept offering in her warmth. While her needs were paramount, he still had a meeting.

The one their civilisation hinged on.

And being left with a soul ricocheting between obliteration and a feeling of something special, he could barely keep himself in check. What good would he be to her? And what of that damn intrusion lurking at the bed's head? But he refused to pull away, allowing his voice to wash over her neck. "Stop staring. What time is it?" Her grip tightened, it had to be Tellen's close proximity. Lucky for him, her arms were slight. Forget his own hell, how would she cope after he left? How would he, for that matter? "Get my secretary to push my 4 p.m. to 4:45." By now he wasn't surprised his deep sighs did nothing to her as they caressed her cheeks. But...

The thought of leaving her.

Was too much to bear.

Pain pounded in his chest harder than the torture he'd endured during their last fight for survival. There'd never be a road back from the hell Hassat created.

"Sorry..." Tellen paused. "It's just..." He paused again, unsure how it'd be received. "It's just, she's been murderous with everyone but you." Did he continue when the Commander's back sunk along his spine? "Commander. She wants closer to you, and while I don't pretend to understand why?" Maybe he should stop there, saying the feeling looked mutual might end in

his bloodshed. “It’s 3:58 p.m., I’ll call her now. I’ll also get hold of Hassat, play dumb, he’d planned a visit, sound good?”

“You read my mind.” No sooner had he answered, the intrusion left, and he found himself lost in her dreamy gaze, flickering with pleads for more. Infatuated by her serene, contented expression, their still bound bodies wouldn’t temper anything, both refusing to release their hold. Unsure how long they’d been lost gazing into each other’s eyes, he found a soft smile riding his lips when Tellen re-entered the room.

“Your secretary moved your meeting. Hassat said he’s thirty-minutes away.” With that sorted, Tellen was eager to inform his Commander, hoping it’d ease his guilt. “Ohh and—”

“Thank-you.” He tilted his head to answer before shifting back, the separation tore worse than the destruction he’d caused. “I need you to organise a female doctor and nurse to check her. I’m afraid something might’ve gone awry...” She tensed under him, and his instincts found their way to her hair, stroking while he continued to smile against her cheek. Desperate for it to be a kiss, but he’d already crossed the line, and he found the strength to turn to Tellen. “They cannot proceed until I’m out of the shower. Do you understand! Repeat it back to me!” Failure to stay away. That’s what met him, and he turned back to her.

“Yes.” Tellen was quick to answer. “I understand. Female medical staff, not to check until you’ve finished in the shower.” He drew a deep breath for this one. “Back to what I was saying. Stage one’s successful and, if it’s any consolation, she seemed to enjoy it. There were at least two recorded orgasms.”

Back to sighing, he wished to Delta—to the heavens on both planets. Heck to anyone or anything that’d listen, it’d be true. “Tellen. We know biologically, our bodies engage in sexual intercourse despite our brains protests, intimacy is a very different beast, you know that.” He understood the man was merely attempting to ease the guilt. Although the irony in ‘consolation’ hadn’t gone amiss, he’d used it enough during the selection process.

“Perhaps not, but it’d be remiss of me not to mention. The way she’s embracing you, simply doesn’t translate into a mere biological act, does it?” Tellen still couldn’t believe the Commander not only disarmed her without a scratch, but she somehow wanted, no, needed him. She still hadn’t released him, if anything she’d coiled tighter underneath those covers.

He accepted Tellen was right. Biological instincts aside, she’d coiled herself around him, refusing to let go. It hadn’t eluded him either, he still

relished in her delicate embrace surrounding his semi-relaxed male member, despite the need to remove himself. Things would start moving soon, and she needed assessing before Hassat arrived. That monster would never glimpse a single part of her. It'd been all the motivation needed.

He shifted his lips, allowing his soft tone to brush her cheek. "Sarah, I need to have a shower. Once I'm out, a woman doctor will check you, to make sure you're okay. But they won't start until I'm back." She nodded against him, releasing her hold before sliding onto the bed. Her expression, sleepy and content, beyond beautiful gnawed at him. They'd never experience each other again.

Now no question.

He wanted her.

Unlike any other woman before.

He'd give his life to see her beauty, smiling as the first and last thing he saw every day, to feel her flesh against his own. He sighed again, she embodied everything he never knew he wanted. But they'd been left ravaged, manipulated in a sinister plot that could destroy the very essence he and Delta were fighting to preserve.

His stomach churned, realising his moral code wasn't the only thing that'd just died. Something else, once untainted, and sacred, passed away alongside it. He'd go to hell for his actions, but that nightmare would have to wait, he still had a planet to save—least he hoped. "Tellen, I need a sheet."

"Yes, Commander." Tellen raced towards the drawers opposite the side of the bed he was standing on, adding a blanket, too. "Here you go."

"Thank-you." Now the moment he feared had arrived, it almost became unbearable to remove himself. Slow and steady, wincing into more gritted teeth, he inched his way out. Her body equally protested with the emptiness he struggled with. His breath stalled to gather himself with what came next. On his knees, resting on his heels, his heart stopped in a dried-out throat at the amount of blood on the bed, and covering them both.

Shit!

Then all too soon, he sensed Tellen gawping when he too gasped. An instinctive possessive rage took the reins, squaring Tellen with a narrowed glare. "Don't You Dare Look At Her! Do you hear me! Don't you bloody Dare!" His eyes narrowed on who fast felt like an intruder as he covered her, hoping he'd done it properly.

Still spiralling down into hell's pit, he leapt off the bed, zero shits about his nakedness, using every one of his three inches in height over the man. Adrenaline pounded through his chest, he held no composure or control. "Did you hear me! Don't you Bloody Dare look at her!" Despite Tellen quivering, it did nothing to cool the blood surging hotter than lava.

Tellen took a step back, caution flashing on high alert, their Commander frightened him. If this was what those lizards faced, forget afraid, he was terrified. The 'no-one's home,' vacant glare, was one thing, but he was lethal enough when composed thanks to the war stories. And right now, he was neither home, nor composed. It froze him in place, leaving only words. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean... Sorry." It failed, so he tried being rational. "Commander, what is it, what's wrong? We've dealt with nakedness so often it's almost normal. I mean, you're in the buff, towering over me right now..." Shit, it didn't work either, the Commander stepped closer, his heaving chest inches from his own. With nothing left, he closed his eyes, waiting to be ended. Relief, nothing else when it was a heavy breath barrelling down and not fists. Though when it landed, he almost hit the deck, anyway.

"I Will Not explain myself to you!"—he pointed in its direction—"Just go sit in that damn office! Stay away from her! Do you understand me! Stay the hell away from her!" He didn't bother waiting for Tellen's response, marching to grab his clothes, before storming back around the bed, throwing them on the chair against the wall.

Hands on his hips, he sucked in a breath then steamrolled his way towards the bathroom opposite the office, snorting in Tellen's direction, on his way to wash what stained red with guilt. His grip on the handle loosened it from the screws, and he slammed the barrier shut, freeing the shelving of its contents and the clock from its brace.

Under the steam, the water burned his skin, and yet it still couldn't kill the guilt of what he'd done. Even once the water ran clear and his forehead rested against the shower's wall, depressing thoughts clouded every memory he should be cherishing. Tellen might've been right, their job saw them deal with naked, heck it'd become mundane seeing erections and swollen breasts while they stripped to the bare bones of why they faced this threat. They had explored physical routes from internal passageways to enzymes, even the way orgasms flooded the body. So why had he reacted with such vicious intent when Tellen saw her? He'd need to apologise, convinced he'd taken years off Tellen's life at his outburst.

Was it circumstance, or his guilt and her innocence? Perhaps her apparent attachment to him, or his definite one to her, or, in all honesty, all of it. Nothing made sense anymore, she'd affected him, and now he'd become hell bent on protecting her at all costs. He'd kill if he had to, himself included, to make amends for what he'd done.

As he stepped out of the water that only rid him of blood, he heard voices. Half dry, he flung the towel around his waist, charging into what he'd turn into a war-zone if need be. Though he slowed a smidge, seeing Sarah in stirrups on the bed, motionless and unrestrained. Her face, swollen from crying through pinched eyes and heaving sobs, reinstated his mission, and he swiftly landed beside the bed, if his orders hadn't been followed.

To his relief, Dr. Lydier sat nestled on a stool. He'd already seen the female nurse, but fury still tempted his rage, his instructions had been ignored. "What the hell do you think you're doing! I said nothing was to be started until I was present!"

"Commander Faulkner, I don't know about you..." Dr. Lydier paused, clearing her throat. "But I don't have the luxury of waiting for you to finish showering to chaperone an investigation."

"Damn it!" His grunt echoed as he whipped off his towel, turning to get dressed. He'd only managed his briefs before being stopped.

"Commander, I may be accustomed to seeing you naked over the last decade, but I assure you, the young nurse in attendance—is not." Dr. Lydier didn't shift her focus from the examination, nor did she skip a beat in the statement.

Shit. "My apologies." He turned, tugging up his pants a little rougher than perhaps he should, catching the open zipper on his groin. After that, he forewent the rest, he wanted back to Sarah, anyway. Unsure what'd greet him the second he came within striking distance, her hand grazed across his thigh, and his need to offer comforting words bent him at the waist to lean in. Caught by surprise, her arms darted around his shoulders, pulling him in until she buried herself against his chest.

Her nerves settled against the strong rhythmic beating of his heart. Fear had crippled her when they wished to start before he returned. But they'd promised, the office man promised Sebastian would return, and now he had she felt safe.

He was fast learning he held zero control over his temper with her. That trembling touched both his heart and shredded his restraint. “Damn-It! How much longer Roie!”

Dr. Lydier ignored the Commander’s agitation. Tellen had filled her in, and a small chuckle formed. She always enjoyed when he did away with formalities. She had no such freedom, though she welcomed his endearment, nonetheless. “Well, I’m actually finished. Like I said, having seen you naked and know of your exceptional reputation; despite her tiny size, I must say you’ve impressed—even me. There’s no damage aside from a few small grazes, she’ll, of course, be bruised and tender, but essentially she’s fine. And I’ve taken the liberty of cleaning the area.”

Dr. Lydier watched in awe as the Commander relaxed his shoulders, though she wasn’t entirely sure he believed her. Over time, the evidence he’d taken more than enough care to ensure she hadn’t been hurt would unfold for him. The woman’s wriggling toes caught her attention, and she elbowed the nurse, releasing the woman from the stirrups she’d been strapped to.

“Thank-you. Are you certain? You’re not missing something? It’s not possible.” He caught Dr. Lydier’s nod to match her warm smile while Sarah’s arms still attempted to strangle him. Still unsure how taking liberties hadn’t caused serious harm, he moved on to the next cluster of confusion as he turned back to Sarah. “So, how did you check without her attacking you?” Curious if her fear just centred around men.

“I’m positive, she’s fine.” Roie then added. “As for attacking. She started, believe me. But Dr. Smythe told her you’d return soon, something about the sooner I finished, the sooner she could be with you again. Take what you want from that, but she instantly froze and complied.” She continued to watch, curious why he hadn’t moved from the woman. He was a gentleman, yes, but he’d allowed her to grip onto him for dear life.

He only moved his head towards Roie and her new assistant as they left the room, hearing Hassat’s voice as he collided with them in the doorway. It yanked him upright, the loud sickening jovial tone as the man entered, fisted his own hands.

“So, Dr. Lydier...” Boyden clasped his hands, rubbing them. “How did it go? She fit enough for more if necessary?” He then leant against the back wall, hands in his pockets. “Are the sensors still in place?”

He beat Roie’s mouth opening, his temper thundering through his words. “Ladies. Best you leave, Hassat and I need to have a chat.” Roie didn’t

look in his direction and the nurse quickly pulled the door shut. Least they smelt the scent of death permeating the room.

Boyden made his way towards the bed, finding it odd the Commander had stepped in to block him. But he tilted his head toward the bed as he smirked. “So, I hear you were successful.” Unable to hide his keenness for the data and wireless connection to monitor her progress, he didn’t catch the Commander lunging forward.

Nor did Boyden expect the Procreation Director to lift him by his shirt, driving him into the wall he’d just leant against. He could add, so hard it rattled every door in the room. Everyone knew the Commander was strong, but even this felt outside his wheelhouse. And when nostrils flared inches from his own, with darkened eyes in a narrowed glare, he questioned whether his life lay in mortal danger if he couldn’t gain control as the Commander’s superior. “What the hell are you doing! Let me go! I should get the President to fire you for this insubordination!”

His composure refused to return. If Boyden wanted to behave like a monster—now he could fight one.

Lies.

It’d fucking left the building.

Those lizards had it easier facing him.

He just needed an excuse, and the roar vibrating low in his chest pushed its threat harder through his fisted hold. “After the Stunt You just Pulled! Doubt you’ll last long enough to do shit, Falden Didn’t sanction this! And I’m losing the restraint to end you! So don’t fucking play with me!” He shoved his fist deeper for good measure, before releasing his hold, letting the man fall like dead weight. Boyden’s raspy coughs as he tried sucking in air did nothing to dispel the seething rage that’d taken over. “Leave, Boyden. Before I do something you’ll regret!”

“Why would I regret something you do?” Boyden wasn’t leaving, not without that data or monitoring tablet, adamant the President would forgive this transgression. If the Commander had failed, someone else could get her pregnant with at least one female from those three ova. “Let me talk to President Xavyin, it must be a miscommunication.” His voice shaky as he remained on all fours staring at the floor, the President needed to rein in his out-of-control pit-bull. Their existence hung in the balance.

Tellen threw caution to the wind, slinking from the office without a squeak. “Chief Hassat, I’ve already spoken with President Xavyin. He was

clear, he didn't authorise this. He's dead against it, and now you've ruined everything, including me. Professionally, it's reprehensible—privately, you've destroyed me.”

He moved back beside the bed, her body had taken on a weird mix of trembling and battle ready. Now she could understand them, this would be frightening. As he leant against the bed facing Hassat, he didn't take his eyes off him when he began stroking her hair, or when her hand rested on the edge of his thigh. He hoped it meant she found comfort and safety in his presence. “Boyden, leave... Your treading dangerously close to something you'll regret.”

“Again, why would I regret anything You Do!”

Tellen stepped in after seeing the Commander straighten. Surely the Chief knew he'd begun cruising towards his own demise. “It'd be wise to explain yourself to the Commander. You found out as I did, he holds both the strength and skill to kill without breaking a sweat or batting an eyelid. It's not worth losing your life over?” He glanced over at the Procreation Director as the last words left his mouth and blew out a breath, least he'd tried.

“He wouldn't dare! You'd be in prison, Sebastian. That'd be a rather big fall from grace, don't you think?”

“Perhaps. Or maybe Falden would see I saved our planet the embarrassment and did him a favour. You've no idea what you've done, do you? Just give me a reason. Go on, I only need one. Say something, I dare you!” He watched Boyden's focus narrow in on his caress of her hair, and she'd responded in kind. Would the fool call him out or try goad him instead?

The latter would see him dead.

Or within an inch of it.

“You're a fool if you think I'll be fired.” Boyden barked as he straightened, rolling his shoulders. “That little wench is nothing but a gift to help us.” He adjusted his cuffs, Sebastian didn't run the show. “And you'd better pray she delivers!” It wasn't until he spat his last few words did he understand his mistake.

He lunged forward, striking with excruciating force, matching Boyden's descent. Hunched over his crumpled form, he delivered another crushing blow. “Fired...” He then smirked into a dark chuckle. “I never said fired, you did. That implies they'd find your body.” Those words did nothing to dispel the flickering rage Hassat had ignited with a gas canister. More powerful blows met with buckling flesh until a hand landed on his forearm. Hovering

over Boyden's near lifeless body, he considered inflicting that fatal blow, but a voice hit his ears, and it was the words that stopped him.

"Stop! Commander. You're scaring her. You have to stop." Tellen felt just as afraid as Sarah. The Commander looked beyond dangerous, is that what greeted those invading lizards?

He tilted his head, remaining hunched over Hassat. Panic and fear gripped her ragged breathing, causing a body-wide tremble as she shifted from her elbow to sitting up. His eyes drifted back down. Lifeless, unrecognisable, and battered. He'd almost killed Boyden. He knew guilt would eat him alive, but this was extreme, even by his standards towards another Deltarian.

No, it wasn't! Screamed back at him from deep inside his mind. "Tellen, call a code orange." He paused with a sigh. "Better call a code red, too." With nothing else, he cautiously approached as her shaking became more pronounced the closer he inched. All of him wished that distress had nothing to do with him.

She never took her eyes off him as he came towards her, after hearing everything, that man on the floor was the reason for her nightmare since waking. And the man moving towards her had done everything to protect her. She wasn't upset at what he'd done, but she didn't know what she had to deliver because of it.

Discomfort between her legs grimaced her expression when she tried shuffling to meet his body as he half rested against the bed, only he picked up the pace, so she didn't have to. His solid arms wrapped around her, encasing the hungry vultures called uncertainty still circling. He left her feeling safe and protected, shielding from the view also helped. What new nightmare would corner her after he left, recalling he had an important meeting? The thought of fighting alone again flooded her fears, and she buried her head into his chest, stuck spiralling how many more she'd have to fight off before they just used their muscle.

"Its 4:30 Commander." Tellen interrupted what appeared a private moment. "Remember, you've a meeting." He cleared his throat, addressing what remained unanswered. "I'll find a ward to settle her on until you and the President decide what's happening."

He understood the second her body thrust into a rapidly escalating vulnerability, and he felt the same, for his own reasons. "Thanks for the reminder. No need to find a ward. She's coming with me." He'd had time in that bloody shower, ironing out what would happen. Not true, he couldn't

stomach letting her out of his sight. It wasn't fear of never seeing her again, or so he'd convinced himself. Rather, where there's one rotten apple, guaranteed there's another tainting the barrel from the inside out.

"You're taking her to the board meeting?" Tellen mused. That'd be interesting. "What about afterwards?"

"Yes. Afterwards, she'll come home with me. I have plenty of staff who can care for her. I'm not letting her out of my sight, not until I know how deep the rot is. Boyden can't have worked alone." He reluctantly pulled away from her soft skin and heavenly warmth, it almost made turning up to the boardroom half-naked worth it. Her attire would be much simpler, with no clothes, he'd wrap her in a sheet and blanket. "Ohhh, and Tellen, I apologise for earlier. It was out of line."

"You know what. I actually think taking her is a stella idea, given the circumstance." Tellen considered his response, still grateful. "Apology accepted." He pointed towards the limp Hassat. "Thanks for sparing me that fate." And he escaped to the office, leaving them in peace.



## CHAPTER 5

He dressed in the office doorway, refusing to take his eyes off her. As he secured his watch, the medical and security teams arrived. The code red knew exactly who their patient was, while the three strong security team in black uniforms, strolled towards him. “Afternoon, gentlemen. Chief Hassat conducted unlawful acts under the Repopulation Act, and against presidential orders. I am responsible for his injuries, I’ll get hold of the President, he’ll direct us what happens next. If I’m going into custody, my one request, is we do it after my scheduled meeting starting in ten-minutes.”

“Commander Faulkner...” The head of security said. “Perhaps an explanation would suffice. I stationed under you during the Draconoid invasion on Star-Base Maximatus. You kept us from falling victim to that hostile takeover, Hassat wouldn’t be on the ground without good reason.”

He extended his hand, respecting the guard’s understanding, and the man accepted his offer. “That young lady there”—he pointed in Sarah’s direction—“She arrived on the transporter as an alleged gift. I beg to differ, but that’s another story. She was an innocent young virgin. Hassat forced an immediate attempt at impregnation. She didn’t consent and has now paid the ultimate price—we both have.” His heavy breath flooded the air, saying it out loud sounded a million times worse.

Unsure what to expect, given he’d just implicated himself in Hassat’s criminal activities. But he needn’t have worried, their expressions were unmistakable, equally infuriated, just as hostile, and their response, swift like his fists.

“Say no more. We’ll take care of him, Commander.”

Grateful, he tapped the guard on his shoulder while shaking the extended hand at him. He couldn’t deny his friend, as President will have to hold him accountable for forcing a woman. But that’d have to wait, he still had this meeting, and sighed standing in the office doorway. As he collected his phone and wallet, he ignored Tellen’s fussing, instead watching the medical team wheel Hassat out on a stretcher, the guards following behind.

While grabbing another sheet and blanket, he heard Tellen also signal his departure, and he raised his waving arm without words. Now alone, and not how he’d wanted or the amount of time he wished, his meeting kept pounding his thoughts. With bedding in hand, he stood over her curled state, facing away from the commotion, and now him. The more he leant over, he realised she’d fallen asleep, it meant his small window of trust still existed.

And now it pained him to wake her, she’d be exhausted, but he’d never allow her from his sight until he got her home. “Sarah.” He’d carefully broken the silence, and it occurred to him now everything had settled, would she revert to battle-ready despite being relaxed enough to sleep? Actually, it didn’t matter, he’d just take whatever she threw at him. Only she didn’t stir, and he’d never take liberties again, even with time ticking.

With the lightest touch, he rested his hand on her shoulder as he whispered in her ear. “Sarah, it’s time to leave...” His breath stilled as she faced him, aware it could go either way. Yet, surprise beat victorious in his chest when her angelic expression offered a soft smile. It caused his own smug grin to meet her half-way.

When she woke to his voice soft and gentle touch after his violent display earlier, her fears melted away. Even if she’d gotten caught up in something strange, the depths of his protection, how could she not trust him? His smile, however, sparked something altogether different, pounding her heart, shocking her mind, and tingling her senses.

Her awareness then shifted towards the room’s eerie emptiness. They were alone. He’d said it was time to leave, and her trust fortified itself, he agasint spoken the truth. She was going with him, and she rolled to face him.

As she did, she studied his serious but strained expression taking over the most handsome face she’d ever seen. Even in those magazines they hid, making fantastical stories which never included what a naked man could do. He’d shown her the magic capable between their bodies—and now she wanted more—wanted him.

Not that he knew what heaven was like, he certainly felt a visitor when she smiled, and despite knowing he had five minutes to wrap her and to that meeting was pushing it. Scrap that, hurrying while an option, they'd never make it, and he'd never rush her again.

If he had to start as scheduled, they'd just have to talk via ear buds while he made the walk. No, they could wait. He'd have a lot of explaining when he got there, anyway. "Can you stand? I need to wrap you in these. I'm sorry. I don't have any clothes for you."

She offered a nod in agreement, certain she could do that for him, and she gingerly started hopping off the bed. She'd only managed to lean forward before his powerful arms lifted her to the floor. Now, standing beside him for the first time, their vast size difference overshadowed her. All that power and he'd been nothing but gentle, even as he wrapped her and she leant heavy against him. Though she pondered how she could keep up with him when between her legs was still tender and he'd raced to cover her.

Her thoughts swept away when he swooped her into his arms. Unsure what'd come next while he adjusted her body, her movement only stopped when her head nestled under his chin. No sooner had that surprise settled did she find herself in motion, the rippling of his chest, caused her own deep sighs at the comfort he gave. She placed her hand on his chest, seeking more comfort in the steady beat of his heart, and she pinched her eyes shut, his clothing felt a tormenting barrier to his skin.

"Let's go, shall we?" Now in the hall, he didn't dare run the trip to the boardroom. Not when each steady step he took relaxed her into a deep sleep. It deepened his primal satisfaction and jack-hammered his sensibility. She still trusted him. His meeting would have to wait the few extra minutes it'd take, certain they'd understand his tardiness.

In front of those cherry red wooden doors that he hated earlier, he turned towards the front reception desk to his left. The same secretary was staring at him with a paled expression. "Would you mind opening the door?" He nodded in the barrier's direction. She staggered towards him, darting looks between Sarah and the door. He'd have laughed if it wasn't so grim and painful.

He got two steps into the boardroom before his arrival with her curled up in his hold was noticed. All five men broke conversation, rising from their side-by-side seats along the back length of the conference table. Their stares in confused disbelief, which became intense glares he couldn't escape as he

dragged out a chair with his foot opposite them and not his usual head of the table position.

Vigilant to avoid her anymore discomfort as he sat, he continued to adjust her until confident she was secured to him. His grunts restarted when he'd been unsuccessful in manoeuvring without waking her. But it afforded him the opportunity to offer her a glass of water from the freshly filled pitcher.

It didn't escape him the men hadn't moved, or their stares lessened. If anything, they'd honed in on his every move. When the deafening silence continued, he also realised he'd foregone formal greetings. "Gentleman, please sit." He and his team immediately noticed.

Fears engulfed the very air she breathed as she trembled, and he wrapped his hands around both her and the glass, steadying her rocky seas. Their masculinity overwhelmed the room, stifling her. Their aftershave, breathing, scent. All male, all overbearing. Had he just taken her from one torture chamber to another, about to feed her to the wolves?

Disappointed his deliberate placement in that seat had failed, his lips grazed along her forehead, breathing in the lavender aroma of her hair. His eyes closed, if only to enjoy it, before stroking her arm. "Drink. It'll help you feel better." She didn't move. "It's only water." Now beyond handsy, he couldn't help it, but it must've helped as the glass landed on her lips.

Only lifting his eyes once the men sat down, it wasn't hard to miss their bewildered expressions alongside their stiffened postures, it'd be interesting. But their continued silence pounded his ears, how thick would it get before one of them broke it?

The glass landed at his chest, slight in movement but there nonetheless, and he relieved her from its hold while continuing to survey the men as she drifted off to sleep. His hands stroked over her, caressing away her stress, but it still wasn't enough, and he pulled her tighter against him as he adjusted himself. Damn-it, his bloody suit wasn't doing him any favours. Though it technically paled in comparison with her suffering, he shuffled until they were semi-reclined, and when he stared at the white eye-saw ceiling, a very different disaster movie played through his mind.

Tobias Raffety refused to hide his dumbfounded expression, the silence was killing him, something was very wrong. First, the Director pushed back the meeting and was now ten minutes late. Neither of which the Commander made a habit of doing, even privately. Those tiny hands hadn't escaped him either. It worried him a young teenager had mistakenly gotten caught up in the

trial. “What’s going on? I saw her hands. Who is she? Don’t tell me she’s just a...” He couldn’t finish.

He sighed while clearing his throat. “First, I apologise for pushing our scheduled meeting and being late, but it was unavoidable.” His eyes drifted from the ceiling towards the men opposite him, adjusting himself to check her wakened state. She didn’t need to hear, that conversation would be very different with her.

“I wouldn’t normally divulge this, but I know you’ll respect its classified nature. My moral compass is currently in a tailspin. You’ve all at one point become close friends, and I may already be past the point of no return.” He sighed, closing his eyes, before lowering his eyes to her. “Gentleman. This is Sarah. She was on the Earth transporter this morning—”

“You’re fucking kidding me!” Mathias Vigalor interrupted. “That bloody explains everything!” He threw his arms in the air before tempering his voice at the stern glare from Sebastian. Hands on the boardroom table’s dark cherry hue matched the doors and his temper despite a more restraint tone. “The bloody commotion this morning, the rush of officials and cancelling the arrival party. The women mentioned how fast they’d been ushered off. We’d thought it was just us, but heck, now it all makes goddamn sense. Those Bloody Bastards!”

His own temper fought the cage he’d locked it in with each new detail he learnt. Hassat definitely didn’t work alone. “Yes, well... Some, like Chief Hassat, decreed her a ‘gift.’ She has a unique condition he wanted capitalised on immediately. And, as you know, timing is crucial.”

The silence weighed heavy on him again. No heavier, deadly almost, as if emotions carried the power to change its composition. News of that severity he’d argue was equally hard to receive as speak. “To answer your question, Tobias. Bone scanning puts her at twenty-five, give or take. But she maxes out at about five-foot four by my estimates. Unfortunately, her plight doesn’t end there, not only had she been a virgin, she was completely innocent to the intimacies between sexes.”

He scanned the men at various stages of losing their stomach, perhaps they’d lose it regardless with the last of it. “That’s not the worst...” He cleared the lump and pain in his chest, resting his chin on her head. “I was told if I didn’t, Berkinsdale would.” His voice trailed off at his own escalating bout of nausea.

“Bloody hell that bastard!” Carlose Pachel’s rage boomed off the walls, only to get the quiet down glare. “You okay. I understand your moral compass lays in tatters, but seriously, your words ‘no playing’ tell us.”

“No playing, right... No, I’m not okay. The thought of Alyster was worse than compromising myself, even with prison lurking. And that doesn’t consider the destruction its caused her—her life is ruined. I tried to stop it, but orders were orders until the doctor heard otherwise. Unfortunately, he didn’t hear from Falden in time, and now I’m hurtling towards oblivion.” His shoulders slumped, they deserved their fate. “We deserve to fail. She wasn’t a gift like Hassat schemed, I believe she might’ve been a test.”

“I have to ask, is she...” Tobias nodded towards Sarah. “You know, okay? She looks... How was sex even possible?” Still stuck on how her petite form made his stomach turn. Soon he’d need a vomit bag.

He didn’t know either, still struggling with it. “Believe me, I feel the same, but she’s been examined, and apparently fine, though I’m not entirely convinced. I’m hoping she’ll consent to a follow-up. But the act itself, it must be an Earth woman enigma, because, from a physical standpoint.” That wasn’t helping his loins. “She caught me off guard, and helped herself—to it all.” The colour returning to the men’s faces struck a chord, reminding him they’d been the right men the women selected. They were in expert hands.

“Soooo, the President, he didn’t consent to this?” Reinner Pilkin asked, agreeing they didn’t deserve to survive extinction if true.

“No Reinner, he didn’t. Though I’m yet to hear that for myself.” His hands fisted against the blanket. If his friend had lied.

Reinner Pilkin offered support, hoping to ease the moral turmoil of his friend. “Sebastian, helping herself doesn’t sound forced. Do you not think it possible, it wasn’t horrible for her?” His voice quietened after the tension grew on the Director’s dishevelled expression. But, he oddly understood the ‘enigma’ comment, finding himself in the same situation earlier.

He sighed, shifting to inhale her soft hair. Still lavender—still her. “I’m aware, in the end, she might’ve been somewhat willing, but it certainly didn’t start that way.” He faced the men, closing his eyes. “I beat Hassat within an inch of his life, I’d have killed him too, if not for—”

“You should’ve fucking done it! That bastard deserves to die!” Blythe Genyses finally entered the conversation after assessing the situation. He’d not used his temper at the same volume, but redirected before he encouraged his Commander to finish. “What’s going to happen to her? Are you going to ward

her?” He knew Sebastian better than most, they’d seen and done things ninety-nine point nine-nine percent of the planet would never know of, or stomach. And his friend, he swore, was struggling with more than his moral code. Unsure if Sarah or the events caused the change, perhaps it was both. After decades, he’d never witnessed Sebastian go caveman over a woman before.

“That remains to be seen.” He cleared his throat for the rest. “No one can get close to her without being injured, she’s broken a nose, left gouges on another’s face, and bitten chunks of three separate doctors. I thought it best to avoid more injuries.” Truthfully, he couldn’t be without her, not until it was forced upon him.

“Seems you quickly became important to her, and that happened before sex. Just look at her, seriously, look down.” Blythe waited while Sebastian did. “She’s curled up on you, that’s trust. Don’t kill yourself with dread with what you’ve done.” He then redirected again, helping his friend. “I saw a communicator. Has she spoken, or you asked how she feels?”

His grunt sailed across her hair, knowing what they were attempting. “I hear what you’re saying. Yes, I welcome being uninjured, and she somewhat trusts me, but I still forced myself on her, no matter the outcome...”—he sucked in another lost breath—“Communicator, sadly isn’t two-way. I was hoping to collect one before leaving, but that office is now closed.”

“Okay. Look, I get it. We all do.” Blythe hated this. They’d survived worse. “We know you had no choice. No one disagrees, just don’t forget before any of that, she’d decided to trust you. And in the aftermath, she still does. There’s something inherently powerful in that.”

“Thank-you, Blythe.” Back to resting his lips on her head. His friend was right. From the moment he entered that room, she’d shown no anger towards him. It birthed a fierce determination to never break that trust forging itself in stone.

“Enough about my spiralling dark vortex into hell. Let’s discuss the agenda of this meeting before it’s midnight. I’m hoping you all have better news.” His eardrums first met with Carlos and his tales over the day. The deeper the man spiralled, his own grip tightened around her. Memories he both hated and relished rode the words filling the boardroom, and his fingertips brushed against the fabric keeping him from her skin. The gentle rhythmic breathing as she slept remained music to his ears and drums to his chest. Heck, even

his soul. He'd never cope letting her go. How could fate place an enchanting, unclaimable temptation at his feet?

Stop!

He couldn't afford to lose himself in those wild, unbridled thoughts, his attention had to remain on the meeting, just like the one before his world ended. More discomfort seared through his chest, and he pushed away those derailing unhelpful train wrecks. Fortunately, laughter helped pull him free, if only for a moment, there didn't seem to be any middle ground.

His eyes on the conversation helped—just. Least all the introductions went well, no hint of an unsuitable match. That, he could acknowledge as stage one being successful. His silent chuckles vibrated as they described in great detail how off-guard these Earth women had caught them. They became less stifled and Sarah shifted in his arms from the hum in his chest, his lips landing on her head as the animated discussion continued. Earth women were so insatiably eager to begin the trial, the men unexpectedly found themselves between the sheets of their own ecstasy until the meeting.

It didn't go astray as he listened to them relay their understanding of the enigma statement. Although he'd deliberately chosen larger women, the physical disparities the men confirmed, were still easily felt the closer their naked bodies entwined. And yet, despite that apprehension, their welcoming embrace startled the men as much as it thrilled their senses. None of them understood how such small delicate creatures not only demanded, but yielded to the full size and length of them. It was the same question he kept asking himself with Sarah.

When the conversation strayed to the differences between the female species, his lips never left her hair. Deltarian women they declared, were far more masculine, both in behaviour and appearance compared to the spirit and poise held by Earth women. Their alluring femininity, their sensual awareness under the covers, and how their arousal responded to being caressed by a man's touch, sent them into carnal urges that bordered on combatant cavemen.

He also agreed, he'd never experienced or even read anything hinting their lay an alluring goddess in femininity. Earth women's grace; dignified, and oozing seduction as they walked, talked, and touched weren't Deltarian in the slightest. How Earth men didn't become barbaric idiots fighting to win the attention of such enamoured beauty baffled them.

Yes, he too believed Earth women held a mysterious appeal, somehow they'd embraced femininity in ways men on Delta fast became drunk off.

It surged his urgency of need at the memory of Sarah underneath him, and he could only imagine her seductive beauty had she been a willing participant.

Stop!

He wasn't the only one struggling to stifle the tight restriction in his pants. They were all suffering from the same fatal attraction, his of course, wouldn't find relief. She was on his lap, and... Sadly, her introduction to him had stolen and tainted the magic bound in the intimacies between two people.

It devastated him knowing that'd been her first time.

Only to torture his heart—knowing it'd be their last.

All because of dirty in-house tactics, using desperate measures for their own ill-gotten gains. Not sure what they were, he sighed. But he'd find the rot infesting the highest echelons of their government and make them suffer.

Unable to travel that path yet, he refocused on the men still neck deep in feeding their arousal, comparing their heated passion like war stories. While he found it reassuring, it also oddly became amusing. Their carry on had him chuckling into her hair, inhaling more of that gorgeous lavender scent, and as he couldn't partake in that conversation, he instead drifted to the ironic sticky position both planets had found themselves in. Earth had an abundance of stunning feminine women and weakening Y chromosomes. While Delta, less than one-hundredth of a percent difference in DNA, had hardened masculine women and an inability to produce female offspring. Did answers lay somewhere dormant in that tiny detail?

Though he hadn't learnt everything about Earth's history, on Delta women were treated like queens. Men driven crazy by the slightest femininity, their presence cherished and worshiped. So why were Deltarian women so masculine by comparison, when treated better than their Earth counterparts? Just look at the men opposite him, and their aching desire.

He was brought back to the conversation when it steered toward a four-letter word. Two of them were certain, no convinced, they'd found the love of their lives.

Shit!

He—they, hadn't planned long term.

Did other leaders not think it'd work, either? He grimaced, it couldn't be true? They wanted women on their shores. Or did they think they'd just import women like cargo? He'd have to find that rot, and answers.

That aside, he, and clearly no one else thought to plan for love and commitment. Or if parties might remove themselves from the trial, settle down

and raise the children they'd created. It appeared several kinks still required ironing out, otherwise the longevity of the programme might come under question.

He sighed into his newfound reality, more meetings, paperwork, and hard decisions. Damn-it, saving their planet last time was easier. He'd give anything to be back on Maximatus as their last line of defence.

Lavender caught his thoughts, not true, it lived in his senses. He'd only accept his old post if she was there, and his dribble drifted to how she'd affected him. Not sure of 'love,' though, in all fairness, he'd not experienced it before. While he'd had plenty of sex, thanks to life, trials, and adrenaline during war, but no woman had sparked his arousal or need like her. He couldn't ignore it was something new, but love.

He couldn't even coin the corny statement she was unlike any other woman he'd met before because she was from Earth. In all those months there, he'd met with thousands of their fairer sex, and none roused anything near the heat she did, or tempted him to mix business with pleasure. Delta, for that matter, too. She was his first in two years, and he'd admit, she was endearingly different.

But thanks to unfortunate events.

It'd ended before anything had even begun.

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