



A SMALL  
TOWN ALIEN  
ROMANCE

# BREKK

Arxxia Fields: A Steamy Small-Town Alien Romance

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

ALANA KHAN

BREKK: A FATED MATE,  
BEAUTY AND THE BEAST  
HALLOWEEN ALIEN ROMANCE

**Arixia Fields: A Steamy Small-Town Alien  
Romance**



Alana Khan

Temptation of the Horizontal LLP



Brek: Book One in the Arixia Fields: A Steamy Small-Town Alien Romance Series by Alana Khan

St. Petersburg, FL 33709

[www.alanakhan.com](http://www.alanakhan.com)

Copyright © 2022 Alana Khan

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be used or reproduced by any means, graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping or by an information storage retrieval system without the prior written permission of the author.

The story, all names, characters, and incidents portrayed in this production are fictitious and products of the author's imagination. No identification with actual persons (living or deceased), places, buildings, and products is intended or inferred and are entirely coincidental.

If you found this book outside of Amazon, it's likely a stolen/pirated copy. Authors make nothing when books are pirated. If authors are not paid for their work, they cannot afford to keep writing.

**Criminal copyright infringement is investigated by the FBI and is punishable by up to 5 years in federal prison and a fine of \$250,000.**

For permissions contact: [alanakhanauthor@gmail.com](mailto:alanakhanauthor@gmail.com)

# CONTENTS

1. Chapter One
2. Chapter Two
3. Chapter Three
4. Chapter Four
5. Chapter Five
6. Chapter Six
7. Chapter Seven
8. Chapter Eight
9. Chapter Nine
10. Chapter Ten
11. Chapter Eleven
12. Chapter Twelve
13. Chapter Thirteen
14. Chapter Fourteen
15. Chapter Fifteen

16. Chapter Sixteen
17. Chapter Seventeen
18. Chapter Eighteen
19. Chapter Nineteen
20. Chapter Twenty
21. Chapter Twenty-One
22. Chapter Twenty-Two
23. Chapter Twenty-Three
24. Chapter Twenty-Four
25. Chapter Twenty-Five
26. Epilogue

Dear Reader

Taliz Sneak Peek

About Alana Khan

Also By Alana Khan

Want A Free Book?

Acknowledgments



## **P**lanet Hallion Sometime in the future...

### **Isabella**

“Thanks for coming,” I say for the third time as I check my wrist comm. “If you don’t mind, let’s just wait a few more minutes for any stragglers.”

Who am I kidding, I wonder as I look out at my audience of two people. It’s a quarter after. No one is going to straggle into the Arixxia Fields Town Hall. I’m left with the two people sitting at opposite ends of the room.

I try not to let them see all my optimism spool onto the ancient wooden plank floor, but this wasn’t what I envisioned when I cooked up what I thought was a great idea.

The blue male with what looks like a terrible white wig at the base of his fragile antennae, and the elderly female with four golden eyes looking out of her emerald green face, look like

they're going to bail in two minutes if I don't get the show on the road.

“Well,” I say with a shrug, trying to dredge up the same enthusiasm with which I pitched this project to the mayor, “let's get started, shall we?”

Their lack of observable emotion makes me wonder if Mayor Alderon paid them to show up. They couldn't be here because they're excited about this, could they? Because they're both glancing longingly at the exit.

“I'm Isabella Martinez, a transplant from Earth. I'm here to tell you about my favorite Earth holiday and why I want to bring it here, to Arixxia Fields.”

At least they're giving me eye contact. That has to be a good sign, right?

“As you know, Arixxia Fields is known throughout the galaxy for our Jule celebration. We even change our name to Frosttown for the festivities. It's an event people look forward to all year. Because it brings so many tourists—and their money—to our small town, over the last few decades, we've beefed up celebrations at other times of the year.”

Crap. I'm losing them. The four-eyed female's eyes are drooping.

I increase my volume and continue, “Which made me wonder how much fun it would be if I brought my favorite Earth celebration to Arixxia Fields. Everyone could enjoy it, and over time, perhaps it could be a value-add to the community.”

To keep their attention, I'm pacing in the front of the room in the town hall on this Hallmark-perfect picturesque town square. If this doesn't keep them awake, perhaps I should lead them in a quick round of calisthenics.

The door behind me bangs open, and I wonder if someone from the women's choir arrived early.

"I'm sorry, we have this room until..." Words quit falling from my lips and the thoughts evaporate from my mind as I turn to see the handsomest male in the galaxy pause in my doorway.

"Sorry," he says.

I should speak. I should find the brainpower to tell him not to be sorry. I should invite him to join us. The word, "Welcome," should escape my mouth. Instead, I look at him, dumbfounded, as I take his inventory.

Why aren't males who look as good as him required to walk shirtless on mild autumn nights like this? I mean, really, shouldn't all women be treated to whatever is hiding under his t-shirt? It's a good thing it's tight and hugs his wide shoulders and bulging biceps. It's almost as good as if it revealed the contours of his manly purple chest.

With a symmetrical face like that, he could be a top-tier star on Earth vids.

"Welcome," I force myself to say, even though it came out as a squeak. "Are you here for the Halloween planning committee?"

I can't hide the doubt in my question. Certainly he's not here for that. Guys who look like him have better things to do on a Friday night.

"Am I too late?" he asks, his brow furrowing like he'll be heartbroken if I ask him to leave.

"Perfect timing! Have a seat."

I explain my vision for the haunted house I want to organize, but I can tell by the expression on all three faces that I'm losing them.

"Excuse me?" the green female says, her arm raised. "My husband wasn't thrilled about me attending this empty penis meeting. I told him it must have been a typographical error. But the more you talk, I'm wondering if perhaps he was correct. In which case, I want no part of this." She grabs her voluminous purse and rises.

"Empty penis?" I tilt my head, baffled, while my brain translates and retranslates until her question finally makes sense. The translators must have gotten weenie, or penis, from ween, which made the word into hollow weenie or—empty penis.

"These subdural translators are amazing, aren't they? But this was definitely a mistake. Halloween doesn't translate into much, but it definitely doesn't mean empty... um." I try to explain while I feel my face flushing in embarrassment.

My gaze flicks to handsome purple guy, then back to the concerned matron.

I start at the beginning, glossing over the origins of the holiday, and focusing on how much fun the haunted house will be. I'm still receiving blank looks, and the woman is still standing, getting ready to make her escape when I finally recover.

"So it really doesn't matter about the holiday's pagan origins. Let's call it the Spooky Fun Holiday, shall we? There's an amusement park in nearby Brexton Woods. Remember how fun it is to feel scared out of your mind on the Durragan ride?"

Ah, that seems to smooth things over. Now that we're all on the same page, I describe creepy looking people jumping out from dark places and making you scream, all the while you rest secure in the knowledge you're perfectly safe. I hadn't realized how hard it would be to describe my favorite holiday in a way that sounded fun.

"It's fun when ugly, scary people come to hurt you?" antennae-guy asks, his head tilted in skepticism.

I circle back one more time, referencing adrenaline and relief. When that doesn't do it, I focus on caramel apples, decorated cupcakes, and how many credits I thought our project could raise for the Children's Hospital. Finally, they're all on board. Now that I've got their buy-in, it only takes a few minutes to explain my vision, pass around a sign-up sheet, and beg them to get their friends and family to volunteer.

I make a mental note to pull whatever word the website used for Halloween and change it to Spooky Fun Holiday. When the

mayor approved this, why didn't he give me a heads up that it translated to porn?

When the sign-up sheet circles back to me and the three of them are filing out the door, I see only two names on it.

"Um, excuse me?" Please don't let the handsome purple guy bail on the committee. "Who forgot to sign the sheet?"

He's already in the doorway. By the way his shoulders hunch, it's a dead giveaway he's the culprit.

"You don't want to help plan the Spooky Fun Haunted House?"

When he turns to speak to me, I realize I've stepped so close I'm invading his space. Every cell of my body lights up like a circuit board on overload. Is it his male gorgeousness? His physical perfection? Some quirk of alien hormones? I conduct a stern internal debate to prevent myself from jumping him.

"I'm not sure I can be of much help. Perhaps it would be better if someone else takes my spot," he says.

"Look around. Do you see other people vying for your spot?"

He looks like a trapped prey animal.

"I assumed you have dozens of people you've already onboarded."

I almost laugh out loud at that. He thinks I have dozens of people waiting in the wings to step up for Spooky Fun Holiday help? "Will you help, uh... what's your name?"

"Brek." "

“Will you help, Brekk? Are you busy tomorrow? The mayor had a tip on an abandoned facility that might be perfect for the haunted house.”

He pauses for the longest time. So long, in fact, that I’m certain his brain is running like the galaxy’s fastest computer as he tries to figure how to extricate himself from this commitment. I’m not much of a salesman, but I’ve read a couple articles on how to close a sale.

“Terrific of you to join the team, Brekk. How about we meet here tomorrow at noon to take a drive to the abandoned meat packing plant on Terryson Road?”



## CHAPTER TWO

**B**rekk

Later that night as I drink tea in my sister Dacia's kitchen, she asks, "Why don't you want to go?"

When I gave her the details of the town hall meeting, I expected her firm pushback when I told her I wasn't going to participate.

I don't want to tell her it's because Isabella is so attractive. She was obviously nervous as she paced back and forth at the head of the room, her high heels clicking on the floor.

I've never seen a human in person before and might not have even known that was her species except she mentioned Empty Penis was an Earth Holiday.

I have to admit, the name tripped me up for a few minutes until she changed it to Spooky Fun. It sounds stupid to me, but she was so passionate about how fun it was going to be, I think she even convinced the elderly Maxxion with the droopy antennae that he would enjoy being on the committee.

Mostly, I just watched her pace, noting the way her full breasts pressed against her t-shirt and her rounded ass filled out her jeans. For my decade in the service, I was seldom around females. Our military is all male.

Since I left the service a few months ago, I've been a hermit in Dacia's home, trying to recover from my war wounds. I must admit, I didn't give a thought to my aching left thigh during the entire town hall meeting. By the end of the night, I was much more consumed with my eager, aching cock.

Instead of telling Dacia I want to avoid Isabella, I inform her the project sounds frivolous and a waste of time.

"We've had this talk ten times since you came to live with me, little brother. You're going to live with me, my mate Harrid, and our adorable daughter for the next few years until your thirtieth birthday. You've come to planet Hallion to heal."

She pours more tea into my cup, though I've only taken a few sips, then continues, "You've had two months to lick your wounds since your stint in the military is over. Now you're going to become part of this community. That means meeting people."

"And I agreed to that. I wanted to meet *male* people. We both know I need to go back to Detrovia when I turn thirty to experience *desmoni* and find a mate."

I don't know how she does it, but since we were young, my sister has the ability to tip her head, look at me from beneath a lowered brow, and make me feel like I just said something idiotic.

“You’re twenty-eight years old, Brekk. Don’t tell me you’re incapable of being in the same room with a pretty female. The project sounds fun. I’m sure lots of other people will join the committee and you’ll meet lots of guys to have a drink with.”

Having a friend would be nice. If I had one, I’d be at a pub right now talking about the latest pepball game and not justifying my actions to my sister.

Her husband, Harrid, joins us in the kitchen. Evidently, he heard enough of our conversation to feel he needed to add his two credits.

“It would do you good, Brekk. Get you back out. Join the living. Your service is over. It’s time to have some fun.”

I don’t argue. I know when I’m outnumbered. It’s just that the Empty Penis Holiday doesn’t sound like fun. A building filled with spooky, blood-covered people emitting blood-curdling screams sounds a lot like the war I’ve been fighting for the last ten years.

Every male from Detrov is mandated into service from age eighteen to twenty-eight. That’s supposed to give us two years to acclimate back into Detrovian society before we turn thirty.

At some point in our thirtieth year, our body chemistry changes, and *desmoni* begins the moment we meet our enamored mate.

It tempts fate to connect with a female prior to that because *desmoni* is so compelling it overrides any other relationship

you have. Every Detrovian male knows not to get involved with anyone before *desmoni* hits. It's a recipe for heartbreak.

“Go on the ride with the human female tomorrow. What harm could it do?” Dacia asks.

She's right. I'll go with Isabella to scout a building. After that, I'll volunteer to paint the sets or something.

“You're right. What harm could it do?”



## CHAPTER THREE

**I** sabella

I haven't felt this excited about a guy since I was wishing, hoping, and waiting for Kirk Melchior to ask me to prom in senior high. Jerk. I wound up going with my best friend.

As I pull up in front of the town hall, I slow down, just to get a better look at Brekk who is waiting for me on the front steps. How does anyone get a body like that? Which begs the question, how do you get a body that perfect when you have the most handsome face in the galaxy? It doesn't seem fair.

Even his long, black hair is shining as it blows in the wind like he belongs on the cover of a romance novel. Well, I can't hold that against him. Instead of being stuck up, he actually seemed shy last night.

I set the hover down, open the window so he sees me wave, and watch his expression as he sees the little red hover is mine. Instead of being excited to see me, his face locks down. I'm not sure whether it's with irritation or apprehension.

Perhaps there's still some residual weirdness about the name of the holiday. I'm not going to let that deter me.

Soon he's crammed in my hover, reminding me just how wide those muscular shoulders are. And what gives him the right to smell so darn good? I promise myself I will be subtle and take only small olfactory sips of the delicious smell that seems vaguely reminiscent of hazelnut coffee and polished leather.

"Thanks for coming with me," I say brightly, using that as an opportunity to take another look at him. Yum.

My hover, which hasn't acted up in over two weeks, decides today is the day to be difficult. I have to press the start button three times, but it eventually sees the error of its ways and comes to life with a hum as if we didn't just have an argument.

As we fly to the site, Brekk is studiously keeping his eyes on the road, although there's no traffic in the direction we're heading.

He's a terrible conversationalist. I imagine it like a tennis game where I lob him easy shots and he drops the ball. Unless I ask him a specific question, he simply nods or shakes his head.

"Could this be it?" I mutter when I close in on the coordinates Mayor Alderon gave me. "Wow! At least from here, this place looks perfect."

"Really?" he asks, which tells me he still doesn't quite get the idea of the Spooky Fun holiday.

It's an abandoned meat packing plant, all right. If I was from Hollywood, scouting for the perfect setting for a scary movie, this would be it. Unless we could find an abandoned psych hospital, although that's been done to death.

The roof on the rightmost wing of the building has caved in, but the left wing looks to be in good repair.

I park close, but we still have to make our way through ankle-deep fallen leaves and then mount crumbling steps. Because I wanted to look my best, I wore heels and a red dress that would be more at home at a cocktail party than scouting for creepy locations.

I've always been socially awkward, but have spent my life ignoring my fear and forging ahead. I should have known better than to dress this way, but I wanted Brekk to notice me. Bad planning.

When I almost turn my ankle, his lightning reflexes catch me to keep me from falling. Although I've been narrating everything, chattering on about how perfect this place looks from the outside—the crumbling appearance—the leafless trees, my verbal diarrhea stops in mid-sentence.

His palm is on the small of my back, his other hand holding mine. Electricity is arcing between us that is not a figment of my imagination. His touch actually turned something on inside my skin.

I've experienced a lot of things since I left Earth and arrived on Hallion, but this is by far the weirdest. When I glance at his face to see if he feels it too, his face is paralyzed: jaw tight,

nostrils flared, eyes straight ahead. If I had to bet, he's feeling it, all right. Are we both socially awkward? Because neither of us mentions it.



## CHAPTER FOUR

**B**rekk

Our tour is a blur. Isabella is a talker, which is good because I don't think I've said more than a few words since I entered her hover.

I'm trying to pay attention to her enthusiasm as she describes her vision of what will happen in each room, but most of my mind is focused on the shock of what felt like electricity that bolted through me when I touched her.

Every schoolchild is taught about *desmoni* in grade school when we learn about sexuality. I understand it not just from books, but I've spoken to my father, Harrid, and others. If I wasn't 100% certain that it only occurs between two Detrovians, and only after the male turns thirty, I would assume it just struck and that Isabella is my enamored mate. But that's crazy. She's human and I'm 28.

The building is a mess. The roof on half of it is falling in. The rest of it is stark, in disrepair, and frightening. Oh yes. That's

the whole point of this odd Earther holiday.

“This is it!” she cries, her excitement palpable as she turns in a circle to inspect the room. “Just look at this!”

I’m looking, all right. It’s one of the largest rooms we’ve inspected. It still has pulleys and meat hooks hanging from the ceiling.

“Just imagine a bunch of dummies of many species hanging from those meat hooks. Maybe a techie person could rig some animatronics to have some of them wiggling like they’re still alive. Perfect!”

Her radiant smile fills her face with joy at the same moment I’m wondering where I could run to empty the contents of my stomach. One thing is certain, this female has never been to war.

“This room is going to be the last one they travel through. Our guests are going to love it.”

She looks so happy, her smile stretched on her face, her brown eyes sparkling with excitement. I don’t want to break the mood.

“Perhaps there should be a disclaimer? For squeamish people?” I suggest.

Her perfect pink lips pop open. Clearly, she never thought her Spooky Fun Holiday might be upsetting to people.

“Right.” She nods slowly, then faster. “I imagine people who’ve never heard of Hallow—Spooky Fun Holiday might need a clue about what they’re getting into.”

She rubs her palm over her mouth as she thinks, then looks at me for the first time since she almost fell on the steps entering the building. Her gaze immediately darts from mine when she asks, “What about you? Does this sound fun to you?”

In my mind, I curse Dacia. I wouldn’t be here right now if she hadn’t nagged me into doing this. I don’t want to burst Isabella’s bubble. She’s so excited about it. But I should probably tell the truth.

“I’m a veteran. The idea of wriggling, almost-dead bodies lacks... appeal.”

Shit. Her happy expression crumbles and she reaches out to touch my arm, then thinks better of it and yanks her hand back. Does her reluctance to touch me mean she felt the electricity arcing between us earlier? I thought it was just me.

“I hadn’t thought of that, Brekk.”

My cock jerks in my pants when my name crosses her lips.

“I’m sorry if this is traumatic for you.”

I’m a grown male, neither deserving nor desiring pity from anyone, but her clear concern for me is touching.

“Maybe we’ll have just fun, spooky stuff for most of the tour. People could opt out there.” She points to one of the doorways. “This part of the experience could have ‘Enter at Your Own Risk’ warnings. What do you think?”

“That might work,” I say, though I wonder who would want to go through a door with a warning label like that.



## **T**wo Weeks Later... **Isabella**

Efforts are in full swing here at the meat-packing plant. Somehow, between word of mouth and Mayor Alderon strong-arming some of his friends and associates, I've got a full contingent of helpers.

It took a while to explain my vision, especially since the first thing I had to do was disabuse them of their misconceptions about the name of the holiday. But now everyone is on board, and we even have every member of the high school drama club on the team. They're in another room, practicing blood-curdling screams and zombie walks under the tutelage of their drama teacher, Miss Pfaff.

I watch poor Brekk every time a particularly hideous scream or cackle drifts our way. I don't know what war he fought, but whatever happened during his tour of duty must have been awful. His gorgeous face slackens for a moment as his

lavender eyes widen. Then it's as if he orders himself to chill out and come back from wherever his mind flew off to.

Yet, he shows up every time we have a meeting, and works wherever we have a need. Although after that first day in the room with the meat hooks, I never sent him in there again.

His face and body are like magnets to me. It doesn't matter how many people are in the room. When he's here, I can't tear my gaze from him. There are times I think the feeling is mutual. Other times, though, it seems he barely knows I'm alive.

It's not like he's interested in any of the other females here. He gives the high schoolers a wide berth, thank goodness. We have a decent number of single females, including some MILFs that seem to have set their sights on him. He's not interested. Nor does he seem to be batting for the other team.

I can't forget that spark, more like an electrical shock, that shot through me when he kept me from tumbling off my high heels the first day we explored this place. It seemed the feeling was mutual. When we're alone together, though, he's practically tongue-tied. For a guy who fought in the military, if I didn't know better, I'd think he was shy.

"Let's take a lunch break!" Miss Pfaff, says after blowing her whistle. Someone told me she does double duty as drama teacher/pepball coach. That explains a lot.

I arranged for our Spooky Fun Holiday to be in the fall, just a few months before the big Jule festival. This time of year reminds me of my home on Earth. The leaves have mostly

fallen, with only a few stragglers in hues of magenta and apricot clinging to the trees.

As a fundraiser, the students brought big pans of *berenton* casserole, along with salad and some pathetic attempts at decorated fall-themed cupcakes. They're going to have to up their game on those if we're going to make any money selling them when we're open for business.

I grab a plate of food, and just happen to sit next to Brekk on the front steps.

"Having fun?" I ask as I poke my fork through the cheesy, noodley, meaty dish that reminds me of lasagna.

"Yes."

Damn. Brekk is failing at the conversation game. He seems not to understand that when I throw the conversation ball to him with a question, he's supposed to say something back that will keep the discussion going. Unless he doesn't want to talk to me, which is the impression I get.

"What do you think of the *berenton* casserole?" I ask. I'm nothing if not determined.

"Good," he says around a mouthful of food.

If I had a few more IQ points, I might be smart enough to give up, shovel the rest of my food into my face, and return to work. But this purple male, whose face, hair, and body could land him a spot as a model anywhere in the galaxy, is too spectacular to give up on.

“Which do you like better, practicing putting corpse makeup on your models, or painting backdrops?” At least he won’t be able to give that a yes or no answer.

First, he shovels a big forkful of casserole in his mouth, then enthusiastically nods his head while saying, “Yes.”

I had a friend who told me she was a sapiosexual. I did a double-take, then gathered my nerve to ask what that meant.

“It means I find intelligence sexually attractive or arousing,” she told me.

I guess that explains how the notoriously hideous-looking Dr. Anton Emerton back on Earth who discovered the Bionic Neutron Transmitter Interface dates an endless stream of the galaxy’s most beautiful females.

When I gave it thought, I had to admit I’m a sapiosexual, too. Except with Brekk. For all I know he has a room temperature IQ. Although he’s barely said a full sentence to me, I’d go to bed with him in a heartbeat.

I’m not proud of that fact, but it’s true. He’s just too beautiful to say no to. That is, if he ever bothered to ask. Which he hasn’t.



## CHAPTER SIX

**B** rekk

Detrovian males don't date. It's simply not done. It's because of our biology. How awful would it be to develop a heart connection with someone and then have it highjacked during your thirtieth year when *desmoni* grabbed ahold of you and told you your enamored mate was someone completely different?

Being attracted to someone of the opposite sex has never been an issue before. For most of my life, I've been on the battlefield or in an all-male office at headquarters.

Everything has changed since I met Isabella. Once I got over her lack of purple pigment, I found her bland human face quite attractive. Her brown hair, rather than being straight like mine, bounces and moves in the wind. Her eyes, the color of morning *drassah* with cream, shine, especially when she's passionate about something. Which seems to be all the time.

If it weren't for *desmoni*, I'd take her out for dinner when we're done here tonight. Or meet early to help paint backdrops. Or walk the quaint town square as we talked and got to know each other.

I think of those things when I stroke myself at night. Well, that's a lie. I don't think about fun things to do with her in public. Mostly, I think about what she might look like naked, or with her lips wrapped around my cock, or both. I give myself a stern talking to every night while brushing my teeth, then climb into bed and do just what I promised myself I wouldn't do.

It's madness. Dangerous madness. But I can't stop myself.

Perhaps I'm crazy, but I think she might be interested in me. I thought of asking Dacia and Harrid what it means that she always manages to sit next to me during our breaks. But letting them know I'm interested in a non-Detrovian would alarm them. They already worry enough about me.

So I try not to engage in conversation with her. It's really for the best.

"Really, Brekk? Out of all the projects you've worked on, you don't have a favorite?" she asks.

I spent ten years in the Detrovian military, doing the bidding of my commanding officer. I never asked myself what I enjoyed doing. This is why Dacia wanted me to spend the next two years on Hallion, so I could discover aspects of myself never explored before.

The only two things I've learned since I arrived on this planet are that I love playing with my niece even when she wants me to sit in a tiny chair and drink tea with her, and that I enjoy being in the same room with Isabella.

She's still gazing at me with those inquisitive brown eyes, waiting for more of an answer than the "yes," I've already given her.

"The makeup is fun. I'll admit. I even had some new ideas about how to make the Numans on our team hideous."

I didn't think what I said was very exciting, but Isabella's face lights up when I tell her this.

"Wait right there!" she orders, setting her half-eaten plate of food on the step as she charges back into the building.

A few minutes later, she returns with a computer sketchpad.

"Show me!"

When Isabella talks this way, it doesn't seem bossy. It's just her way of expressing her enthusiasm.

I make a turquoise outline of a Numan head. They have what they call *brill* instead of hair. They're thick hanks of flesh and muscle that hang partway down their back. Since they're hairless, they don't have eyebrows, just little raised thatches above their eyes.

Using other colors, I sketch layer upon layer of ways to accentuate their cheekbones and hairless eyebrow areas until they look terrifying.

When I hold the pad toward her, it takes a moment to figure out what emotion she's showing. Realizing she's horrified, I try to pull the pad back, then remember that's the effect I was trying for.

“Amazing, Brekk! You have a talent for this!”

My chest is filling with pride that pretty Isabella has proclaimed I have talent. Then, it's like watching a vid on slow-motion as her hand spans the distance between us and she touches my biceps.

I've only been out of the military a matter of months. My reflexes should be quick. But I'm not quick enough to escape her touch.

Whatever sparked between us that first day on these very steps was nothing like the lightning-strike of energy pulsing through me from the tip of my head to the soles of my feet. Those areas, though, are negligible. The most shocking thing is what her touch just did to my cock.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

**I** sabella

I'm no virgin. Before I went all the way in high school, I spent many evenings in the backseat of my boyfriend's hover petting until I was so aroused I could have come from the slightest touch. Of course that never happened because he hadn't known where to touch.

I've never been *this* aroused, though. One moment I was actually having a conversation with Brekk, admiring his handiwork at transforming the handsome face of a Numan into something worthy of a starring role in a horror flick. The next moment, I barely grazed his biceps and thought I'd touched a live wire.

Glancing down, I see my nipples are so hard they're about to poke through my t-shirt. My heart is beating in my clit, demanding immediate friction.

Our physical connection was so palpable, it actually took effort to yank my hand off his purple skin.

Our conversation is forgotten as we simply stare, wide-eyed, at each other. I stammer. He tears his gaze away, sniffs, and mumbles something about needing to get back to work.

What the heck was that?

I've only been off planet Earth for six months. During that time, I've been getting acclimated, meeting tons of new friends, and making sure I'm nailing my work-from-home social media job. It pays well, but I can't afford to slack at it. It was only a month ago that I decided I wanted to put my energy into the Halloween Festival and began lobbying the mayor to give me the greenlight.

In all my time on Hallion, I've never dated. I haven't had occasion to touch another alien species. Is what just happened normal?

I doubt that. If it were, Brekk's eyes wouldn't have bugged out of his head, and he wouldn't have jogged into the meat packing plant like his hair was on fire and he needed water to put it out.

All day as I go about my business, I try to figure out what to do with this attraction I have to the Detrovian. Between another tutorial with the high school kids on the proper zombie walk and a quick consult with Jumall, a tech wizard who is doing wonders with the animatronic dummies on meat hooks, I try to consider what to do with Brekk.

Fact one: He's the most gorgeous person I've ever been in close proximity to. Fact two: I want to do dirty, dirty things with him. Fact three: We have some type of chemical

connection so inflammatory it could ignite a factory full of pyrotechnics.

That first spark on the steps a few weeks ago? I chalked it up to my imagination. After what happened today? I can't deny there's some bizarre physical phenomenon happening between us. By the look on his face, he felt it, too.

Fact four: Sadly, I think I really am a sapiosexual. Brekk and I have absolutely nothing in common. He's like a caveman with his monosyllabic answers. When he finally does talk, there's nothing particularly stimulating about what he has to say.

I almost bump into a shaggy blue guy whose face looks like it's been torn apart and sewn back together.

"Nice job," I say. "Who did that?"

"Purple guy."

It figures.

Just hearing his name—well, his description—and my body lights up like a Christmas tree.

This makes my decision for me. Lukewarm IQ or not, I'm going to make one more play for Brekk. I know, it makes me a petty, superficial woman. Although I'm not proud of it, my body demands it.

Tomorrow is dress rehearsal. There will be too many moving parts for me to focus on anything but making sure everyone is in the right place at the right time.

Two days from now, though, I'm going to go for broke. If Brekk hasn't made his move by then—fat chance—I'll proposition him.

What's the worst that can happen?



## CHAPTER EIGHT

**B**rekk

I've been holed up in a bathroom in the crumbling east wing since lunch, scrolling through my wrist-comm searching for answers.

My temperature spiked, my blood feels like it's ten degrees hotter, and the skin around my canines is painful to the touch. My hands are now shaking so badly, another sign of impending *desmoni*, I can no longer read my wrist-comm.

I've looked at twenty websites, and even if I could steady my hands long enough to look at twenty more, the answer seems clear. Although it doesn't make sense, there seems to be no other explanation. I'm entering *desmoni*.

All twenty websites also say it only happens after a male's thirtieth birthday and only with a Detrovian female. The facts are clearly at odds.

To my knowledge, there isn't another Detrovian female for miles. That's not how *desmoni* works. The male has to know

the female.

I guess this is one for the record books. As much as I don't want to believe it, I've met my enamored mate. Isabella.

Although this female is excited by ugly, spooky things, I have a feeling I know what will happen when *desmoni* fully descends. She's going to race in the other direction.

Unrequited *desmoni* gets its own entry in the Intergalactic Database. The pain of the initial changes normally eases a few months after mating. If the male and female don't bond and live together, the nightly pain never abates. A Detrovian male only gets one enamored mate. If the female he bonds with isn't interested, he will never have another love.

There's not much I can do except try to get Isabella to like me. I've been holding back until now, keeping my distance, trying to keep our attraction from growing. I didn't want to become entangled because I planned to return to Detrov before my thirtieth birthday, then find my fated mate. Since Isabella *is* my enamored mate, it means my strategy needs to change. Immediately.

I still have the pad I used to sketch the Numan makeup at lunch, so I make a rough sketch of what a Detrovian male looks like after *desmoni*.

I've seldom seen this in person. It only happens to mated males after midnight. I rarely saw my father this way. He and my mother were always in their room by that time of night. No mated males were in the military, so I never saw one there.

There were certainly enough pictures on the websites I just visited to refresh my memory. As I sketch, I spend far more time with this mockup than I did with the idea I showed Isabella an hour ago. I spare no effort embellishing the face with thick browridges, bumps, and extra lines of cartilage at the top of the nose, along the eye sockets, and across the forehead. I add prominent downward-facing fangs and deepen the purple skin until the shade approaches black.

After designing and looking at ugly faces for weeks, I must admit, this just might be the ugliest thing in the meat-packing plant. Now all I have to do is show it to Isabella.

### **Isabella**

“Isabella! I have another design!” It’s Brekk.

After the way he hightailed it away from me during lunch, I didn’t think I’d see him again today. In fact, I’d wondered if I would ever see him again.

He’s holding the computer pad and looks excited. He’s cute when he’s animated. Well, he’s cute all the time.

“Look what I came up with,” he says, thrusting the pad at me.

“Dear God! You should have warned me,” I scold. It’s so horrifyingly ugly, my head whips back to give me a wide berth from the picture. “Terrifying!”

“You like it?” he asks shyly.

“You outdid yourself,” I tell him as I give closer inspection to the picture. “On Earth, if I wanted, I could have a steady diet of this stuff. People spend their whole lives developing

hideous pictures of humanoids for vids. I have to hand it to you, Brekk. This takes the cake.”

“Cake?” he asks.

I forgot. No matter how good our translators are, they sometimes mangle idioms. Just look what they did with Halloween.

“This is the most horrifying, grotesque, *revolting* face I’ve ever seen. Wow. Being this ugly should be illegal.” I laugh as I carefully hand the pad back to him, taking special care not to touch him.

I thought he’d be happy at my praise. Instead, the corners of his mouth turn down as he looks at me with his brow lowered. Damn. He manages to look good enough to eat even when he’s scowling. The gods were very generous to him. Too bad it all went into his looks and not the IQ department.

“That’s high praise, Brekk. I think this guy should be our official greeter as they enter the meat-hook room. It will be a clear message that people should enter with caution. You did great.”

“I did great,” he repeats glumly.

I’m not sure what got into him.



## CHAPTER NINE

**B**rek

As I prepare for our dress rehearsal, I'm preoccupied as my mind plays and replays the moment I showed her a picture of a Detrovian in the throes of *desmoni*. I don't know what I expected. Did I think she'd look at it and exclaim how handsome the male was?

As a boy, the first time I saw my father after midnight, I practically pissed my pajamas. I was on my way to the bathroom and he was going to the kitchen. When we almost slammed into each other in the hallway, I screamed. It was not a masculine noise. My sister, who was in her room at the time, took special joy in imitating it to irritate me for years to come.

If I was shocked and horrified by my own father, my own race, it's no wonder Isabella was properly disgusted, especially since she thought that was why I showed her the rendering.

At some point in their teen years, Detrovian females learn the truth of *desmoni* and what their future mates will look like

after midnight. They have years to adjust to the idea, just as we do as males.

Isabella will have no such grace period. I either need to leave the planet, courting pain every night for the rest of my life, without even giving her a choice, or she's going to get a look at me in all my *desmonic* glory.

Because there was nothing on the Intergalactic Database that addressed a Detrovian mating with someone of another species, I have no idea when the full effects of *desmoni* will occur. Perhaps I'll get lucky and be able to redouble my efforts to court her before I turn fully *desmonic*.

I feel her presence when she walks into the room. Is this another symptom of *desmoni*? She's wearing a flowing white dress, complete with veil. Because the friends and relatives we invited for this dress rehearsal haven't arrived yet, the veil isn't covering her beautiful face. Good, because I can't keep my eyes off her.

Usually, her gaze drifts to me whenever we're in the same room. This is the only hint I have that she might be interested in me. Today, though, she's distracted. Clipboard in hand, she's ticking off names on the roster, reminding people where they need to be, and trying to keep a hundred working parts moving smoothly.

When she approaches me and Threxil, the Anderonian male I'm putting makeup on, she nods her head. "That picture you showed me yesterday didn't do this justice," she says, cupping her pointed chin in her palm as she examines him.

“You look horrifying,” she tells him. “I’d like you in the doorway to the meat-hook room. Don’t allow anyone in under 18 and be sure to tell everyone it’s pretty gruesome. I wouldn’t want to truly terrify anyone.”

She looks at me and adds, “I’m glad you mentioned that all aspects of my Earther holiday might not be for everyone. It was good of you to tell me.”

She gets a few steps away before she turns around and says, “I’m so glad you’re a behind-the-scenes guy. It would be a shame to put makeup on that handsome face of yours.”

My stomach cramps the moment she walks away.

### **Isabella**

Tomorrow’s the night. I’m going to do it. I don’t care if he has the IQ of a wet dishrag, I’m going to seduce the handsome purple male. This is just my first volley. The shot across the bow as they used to say.

I told him he’s handsome. I’ve made my intentions known.

Tonight, we’ll have sixty to one hundred friends and family to practice on. The high schoolers are in the other room screaming and moaning to warm up their vocal chords.

My sources tell me tomorrow we’ll have at least a thousand people piling in from neighboring towns. When we’re done, I’m going to find Brekk, pull him into a dark corner, and let it slip that I’m not wearing any panties. If he’s too dense to get the hint, I’ll start removing his clothes, or my own. I promised myself I won’t stop until we’re doing the deed, or he says no.



## CHAPTER TEN

### **T**he Next Day Isabella

My roommate in college was from Georgia. When she was super tired, she'd say, "I'm about to fall out." I hear you, Penny, because right now I'm about to fall out.

Our first real night of the Haunted Meat Locker brought in 1258 visitors and a whopping 12,500 credits we're going to donate to the Children's Hospital. Even that huge donation isn't enough to excite me right now. I've even let my vow of seducing Brekk slide. It will have to wait until tomorrow. Right now, I just want to fall into bed.

Instead, I have to make sure everything has been cleaned up, no expensive props or clothing have been left lying around, and all the high school kids have been picked up by their parents.

I'll admit, even though I know the things hanging from the meat hooks are just dummies, it still creeps me out to walk

through this room, especially when it's deserted of all living beings. Instead of traveling through the middle of the room, dodging frightening dummies of a dozen different species, I hug the wall to get to the far end.

I just have to check the costume room, and I can be on my way.

"Hey Isabella," Garrex, one of the prop guys, says. He's a super nice volunteer fireman who has been helping since our first big meeting. "I think you're the last one here. Want me to stay and walk you to your car?"

"I'm fine. If you're as tired as I am, you'll want to be on your way. Just one more thing I have to check. I'll be gone in a minute," I tell him.

The costume/prop room is in an old industrial refrigerator. It was the perfect place to stash things that could be eaten by the abundant nocturnal rodents we discovered roamed this building at night.

We simply stow everything in the fifteen-by-fifteen metal box. Since we started this routine, our valuables haven't been touched.

I peek in the doorway, expecting to give it a quick once-over, but I hear a noise in the back corner. Shit! Is a cat-sized rodent nibbling at one of our velvet-hooded monks' gowns? We really stretched our budget to buy them.

Tired as I am, do I have to find a broom somewhere and roust the offender?

I enter to check things out and accidentally kick the wooden block we use to wedge the door open during the day. Whirling to catch the door, I realize I'm too late when the heavy metal door slams shut with a bang.

“Damn!”

Even as I turn to open the door, my stomach feels heavy with dread. How many times had I meant to ask someone to disable this door mechanism? Every time I was about to do it, though, something more pressing popped up. The sturdy block of wood did its job fine as it kept the door propped open during the day. The doorstop did its job fine, that is, until clumsy me kicked it from its rightful place and locked myself in the creepy metal box after midnight.

I pull the door handle with all my might, knowing it's futile. This antique meat locker wasn't meant to be opened from the inside.

Running my fingers along the wall near the door, I search frantically for the light switch. With no light seeping in from the other room, it's pitch black in here. It takes me a long minute trying on both sides of the door before my fingers finally find the light switch. It's almost anti-climactic when I flick the lights on and the bulb pops, sparks flicker, and then... blackness.



## CHAPTER ELEVEN

**B**rekk

She's screaming. This isn't like the scream I made when I discovered my father in his *desmonic* form. This is a long, unending, bloodcurdling shriek that could wake the dead. Even though dozens of the performers have been practicing this same scream for weeks, none of them have hit quite the same note of desperation and terror as Isabella is managing right this moment.

I should go to her. Soothe her. Tell her she's not alone in this dark, locked box.

Except I don't think my presence will reassure her at all. That's because I just fully changed into my *desmonic* form. It was my last moan of pain from the metamorphosis that probably caught her attention and caused her to barge in here in the first place—just another reason for her to hate me.

I'm glad I read somewhere that the extreme pain of the nightly change fades after the first month or two when your body

acclimates to the metamorphosis. Good, because that was excruciating. It would be terrible to have to go through that much agony on a nightly basis. Sadly, from what I read, if my enamored mate rejects me, this will happen every night for the rest of my life.

Although there have been hints of these changes over the last few days, those clues were nothing like what I just went through in the back corner of this locker, behind a row of hanging robes.

I realize that if I wait much longer to announce myself, it's going to terrify her even more. I should say something.

"Hello," I say. Brilliant.

"W-who is that? Make yourself known. I'm armed."

She's lying. Of course, she's not armed. She's been walking around all night in that thin white veiled dress carrying only a clipboard.

She doesn't know it's me. How could she? Whatever change my body went through affected my vocal cords as well as every other muscle, cell, and fiber of my body.

Suddenly, it hits me. She can't see me. I can support and protect her without her seeing my new form. Perhaps by the time someone opens the door, I'll find a way to tell her what happened. In the meantime, I'll pretend I stepped in for Threxil.

"It's fine. It's Brekk. I mean you no harm. I was hanging up my costume."

“Brek? It doesn’t sound like you.”

She’s always so sure of herself. The poor thing sounds terrified.

“Threxil got sick and went home early. I put the hideous purple makeup on myself and have been screaming for hours.”

“Oh.” I can hear the relief in her voice. “I’m terrified. I’m so glad I’m not alone in here.”

“Surely someone will be here soon to hang up a costume. It shouldn’t be long,” I console her.

“I just said goodbye to Garrex. He was the last person on site. We’re stuck here all night.”

“What about our comms?” As I ask, we both glance at our wrists, then fumble with them. After a moment of this, we come to terms with the fact that no signal reaches through the thick metal of this old meat locker. For some reason even the comm lights don’t work. It’s as if the antique metal affected their batteries.

I realize my sense of smell is heightened by *desmoni*.

Isabella’s scent a moment ago was terror. It didn’t take a genius to figure that out. What I smell now is still fear, with a hint of... arousal?

I’ve been wondering for weeks if she was interested in me. Being able to smell it would have been helpful.

One other thing is clear now that I’m in my new form. The way I’ve been holding myself back, not talking to her,

avoiding her, that's all a thing of the past. It's not just my body that's different. My mind and emotions are, too.

For example, right now I want to erase the distance between us and quench her desire. I've had little inklings of that before, but this is ten times more compelling.

"Do you think you could break us out of here?" she asks.

"I was here when we decided to use this room as a storage area, remember? We checked the lock and I'm the one who carried in the wooden door stopper. We examined this box thoroughly. It can't be opened from the inside."

The old me, from less than an hour ago, would have said that with sadness, trying to break it to her easy and smooth her fears. Now, it's all I can do to keep my gloating smugness out of my new raspy voice. We're locked in together for the entire night.

Pictures of all the ways our bodies can combine race through my mind. It's terrible to discover I'm a horrible person at the age of 28.

Powerful, insistent hormones make thoughts, ideas, and images dance through my head. They have no right to exist, much less within a few feet of the object of my lust.

Lust. The word clangs in my mind as loud as a fire alarm.

*Lust, lust, lust*, I think, in case I didn't get a clear idea the first time.

My cock has never been this hard. Or this big. The idea that she's in the same room as me, needing me to reassure her,

takes a back seat to the desperate need to see what is going on south of my waist.

I slide my hand inside my waistband and grip my cock. A few of the articles I read on the Intergalactic Database mentioned “genital changes.”

What the fuck? Why weren't they more specific? They couldn't mention it would almost double in size? Or that it got interesting ridges or bumps? Or that the need to slide it into a female's hot, wet channel would become *the only thing my mind could focus on*? That wasn't worth mentioning?



## CHAPTER TWELVE

**I** sabella

I breathe deep and nod and talk myself down. A haunted meat packing plant is all fun and games until you're locked inside a tiny metal box with a wolf-sized rodent.

Now that I know I'm not alone and realize I'm not locked in with any immense rats, I try to calm my racing heart. At some point as I breathed and ordered every muscle in my body to stand down, I realized this is exactly what I was hoping for. Well, kinda.

Although I wasn't hoping to be locked in an old refrigerator with Brekk, I *was* planning on seducing him, although I hadn't slipped out of my panties yet. The bone-weary fatigue I was complaining of only a few minutes ago? That went the way of the Merrison 350 computers that are now overflowing our landfills. I'm pepped up and raring to go.

It's pitch black in here. I can't see my hand in front of my face. But I can form a perfect picture of Brekk in my mind.

Long, flowing black hair, purple skin the shade of my favorite pansies in my mom's spring garden, and the most symmetrical face between here and Earth. And let's not forget a body consisting of slabs upon slabs of finely honed muscle.

"Brek? Do you think we could make a little pallet in the back corner? We'll have to sleep somewhere."

He sucks in a breath and makes the oddest grunt before he rasps out, "Yes."

"Are you feeling okay?"

Leave it to me to have the bad luck to finally get in a room alone with him only to have my nefarious seduction plan foiled by him coming down with some bug. C'mon, just for once, something has to go in my favor.

"Never better."

There's the sound of hangers scraping along the metal bar of the clothes rack, then the quiet thump of clothes hitting the floor. If arousal wasn't already skittering along my limbs and pooling in my pelvis, I'd be concerned about the expensive velvet robes on the concrete floor. At this moment, though, I don't care.

"I made us a nest. Come join me."

Kapow! That hoarse request to join him on the soft garments ignites an explosion of desire in my belly. No, lower. This is better, sexier, than I dreamed.

Keeping my palm on the wall, I make my way in the direction of his voice, only stumbling once on a pile of props someone

dumped rather than leaning them against the wall where they belong. Why am I even thinking about this? The object of my lustful fantasies is waiting for me in our *nest*.

When my toes hit the pile of robes, I ease to the floor, my back to the wall. Just as I'm wondering how to tell him he's the object of my fantasies, low IQ or not, he says, "Why don't you come closer, Isabella? Lean against me."

Oh yeah.

If whatever this is between us lasts more than tonight, I wonder if every time we have sex I could get him to scream before we start. There's something about the deep rasp of his voice that makes my insides tremble with desire.

Without making things awkward, how do I tell him I've been fantasizing about him? It's obvious he's been clueless. It's been weeks, and he's done nothing but keep his distance.

"I've imagined our first night together in many different ways, Isabella, but never like this," he husks.

Dear lord. Was that the sexiest sentence I've ever heard? Wow.

"Call me Bella," I say. Somehow, now I'm the one having trouble keeping the conversation ball going.

"Bella."

How did he manage to make my hungry clit flutter with just that one word?

"Bella," he says again, as if he loves the taste of my name on his lips.

“How...” I swallow, then force more words from my mouth.

“How did you imagine our f-first night together?”

Come on, Brekk. Don’t fail me now. Make this good.

He takes a deep breath as he warms up to hit it out of the park.

I’ve been sitting, my ramrod-straight back against the wall.

Before he answers my question, he slides toward me, then envelops me in muscular arms and pulls me crossways onto his lap.

My eyelids flutter in pleasure as he seats me against his warm body. His chest is an iron wall of strength. His arms, viselike, tuck me close, and his cock pulses against my bottom. At least I think it’s his cock. It’s either that or a baseball bat. Certainly, this couldn’t be his male appendage. I don’t care what species he is. None I’ve heard of get that big. Do they?

“When I dreamed about it,” he says and pauses, perhaps to give me time to imagine him in his bed thinking of me, “I pictured it by Arixxia Falls. It’s pretty this time of year. My sister and brother-in-law took me the day I met you. I’ll paint you a picture.”

Did I think Brekk was naïve? Shy? His hands certainly aren’t shy now. One palm is pretending to trace a lazy path up and down the channel of my spine. Except the impudent thing creeps the slightest bit lower on every pass. Perhaps he’s waiting for me to protest? That’s not gonna happen.

His other hand isn’t moving at all. It’s just sitting on my thigh, fingers gripping the outside, and his gigantic thumb making small circles on the inside. That one thumb has captured my

full and complete attention as it languorously rotates only inches from my core.

Brek is n't slow, nor is he disinterested. Brek is a naughty, naughty gorgeous purple male.

He dips his head to graze his lips against my hair, then makes a soft, wet sound like he's about to continue his story, but stops to press those lush lips against my forehead.

"Picture the falls on an autumn day, Bella." My name in his mouth is like magic. It's as if he plucked my nipples while saying just that one word. "Can you see the leaves in an array of oranges, yellows, and maroons?"

Does he want an answer? My mouth is too dry for that, so I just nod.

"Can you hear the water splashing when it crashes down below?"

He's dipped his head, so he's murmuring in my ear. Kill me now. This is so sexy my whole body is one throbbing, horny nerve.

I manage to nod.

"I thought ahead and brought a blanket, so when I ripped off your clothes—"

That image is so compelling a little squeak escapes my lips, but it doesn't slow him down.

"So when I ripped off your clothes, you wouldn't get dirty when I laid you down, split you open, and licked you until you

screamed.”

Holy. Shit. Did I think my gorgeous male wasn't interested?

“Do you, Bella? Do you scream when you come?”

Did he just ask that as if he were asking if I liked cream in my *drassah*?

I don't know how I find the nerve, but I answer. “Not for everyone.”

“But you will for me, Bella. You're going to scream and scream until your throat is as hoarse as mine. And it will be one word, over and over. Brekk.”

“Brekk,” I whisper as I picture every colored leaf, the spray of water after it pounds to the rocks below, and the way his curtain of shining black hair looks in the sparkling sunlight.

“That's right, Bella.” He pauses. Even the hand lazily traveling the length of my spine quits roaming. Just one thumb continues to move, circling, circling closer and closer to the wet heat pooling in my core.



## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

**B**rekk

My cock, this huge appendage rising between my thighs, has a mind of its own. My pulse is beating there. It's insistently thumping. Pre-cum is oozing at the tip.

Nothing on the Intergalactic Database prepared me for this: the sheer, compelling need that makes me feel incapable of cogent thought other than *breed, breed, breed* echoing through my mind.

Maybe the Database did warn me. Some scientific articles mentioned the evolutionary reason for Detrovians' odd biology. Switching into our more bestial, baser selves every night ensures daily intercourse. Daily intercourse ensures the continuation of the species.

I just didn't expect it to be so powerful.

I want to fuck her. *Need* to fuck her. I'm not so fully in my feral form that I don't want to kiss her, though. I'm dying to

tip her chin toward me and claim her mouth. There will be no doubt that I'm changed, though.

I can explain the new ridges and bumps on my face. That's easy. I'll tell her I put on the prosthetics meant for Threxil when he didn't feel good and left early. How do I explain the fangs that just erupted from my gum line, pressing out the old ones and replacing them with a newer, longer, deadlier version?

That's a good question. These teeth are one thing that won't go away at sunrise. For now, if she mentions it, I'll tell her they're fake ones! All for show. She's too aroused to examine them too closely. I can smell her arousal, her need.

As if to erase any doubt, she wiggles a bit. My cock thinks it's an invitation—I've got to get control of him. If wiggling wasn't enough, now she's "accidentally" widened her thighs for me.

"That's right, Bella. Are you picturing my head between your legs?"

She's loving this. Verbal foreplay. My newly sensitive nose can discern which of my words increases her desire. It's not hard to figure out. She likes all of them.

As my arousal escalates, I realize it's not just my cock that is thickening with every passing minute. My tongue is, also. What, I wonder, is the evolutionary advantage to a broader, longer, ridged tongue? Ah, I have a feeling I'm going to find out in a few minutes.

“Finish the story, Bella. Tell me how you want the fantasy to end.”

She sighs, with a little moan at the end.

“Are you shy, little Bella? Maybe you want to show me instead.”

My cock thumps against her backside at that comment. He’s so enthusiastic it’s clear he loves the idea.

She turns toward me, tucks her head under my chin, and whispers, “I’ve always been a firm believer in give and take.”

She wiggles again, and this time I’m certain she’s not doing it to get more comfortable. Her little ass is eliciting just the result she intends, making my cock weep for her.


“I’d have to explore you with my hands and mouth before we figure out how the two of us could fit together,” her voice is earnest, as if she’s describing the solution to a difficult math problem.

This time it’s me who huffs out a shaky breath. I didn’t expect the little Earther to be so open about what she wanted.

Before I yank off her clothes, split her thighs open, and taste the liquid I’ve been scenting since I announced my presence in this little room, I should kiss her.

Lifting her up as if she weighs nothing, I turn her to straddle me as I sit with my legs crossed. If we were naked, we could fuck in this position. I could lift her by her hips and stab my cock into her with no effort at all.

Instead, I dip my head and slide my tongue across the seam of her lips. It's my first taste of her and I know with the same certainty I need air to breathe that I will never get enough of Bella.



## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

**I** sabella

Brek is n't the only one who has been fantasizing about this. I must admit, I never pictured it this way. Because of how shy and standoffish he's been, I certainly never thought he'd be this forward. I also never imagined all the bumps and ridges on his face.

I forgot he hadn't taken off the facial prosthetics. It doesn't bother me, though. I've kissed a lot of Earth guys before. Isn't part of the allure of having sex with an alien that they're different from me?

Using the pads of my fingertips, I explore his face, tracing the ridges and bumps, especially around his eye sockets and forehead.

"These feel like skin."

"Mmm," is all he says. "Keep touching me. Anywhere. Explore me, Bella. I have ridges and bumps in places you'll find *interesting*."

His tone, his words, are so arousing my hands drop to the hard granite of his shoulders as I let him take over the kiss. Even his tongue is alien. It's long and thick and has ridges that feel sexy as hell as I investigate. I shiver as my mind throws me a picture of what it will be like when that tongue explores me down below.

I've known him for weeks, had a hundred conversations with him, albeit most of them consisted mostly of monosyllables. How have I missed those fangs? I flick one of them with my tongue, barely avoiding cutting myself on the sharp tip. Was I so consumed with how handsome he is I missed the fact that this male is a *beast*?

I want to pay attention to our mouths as they mate. The sheer intensity of his tongue invading my mouth, owning me, should engross me, right? But how can I focus on that, as delicious as he tastes, when the ridge of his cock is pressing against my eager slit?

Sliding my hands down his back, I'm not so impatient as to miss every hill and valley of striated muscle, but it's my ultimate destination that has me enthralled. My palms cup the muscular globes of his ass. Has anything ever felt as good as this?

They're round and tight and perfect because they're attached to *him*. And when I pull them toward me, it allows me to writhe against his massive cock. Not that he wants to pull away, but I'm holding his body hostage, pressing against him. The hard thickness of him makes me shiver with pleasure.

“Brek,” I say on a sigh as I ride him harder.

He mimics my posture, clamping my ass in almost a mirror image of how I’m gripping him. When he yanks me against him, I yelp, which causes him to release me.

“No. Don’t stop. I was surprised because... it felt so good.” To underscore my request, I return to his mouth, plying his tongue with mine.

“You like this, Bella?” he husks into my ear as he thrusts against me. “How about this?” He sneaks his palms under my wedding dress and slides them up the outside of my calves and thighs until they again lodge on my ass cheeks. This time, there’s only a small slip of fabric between those gargantuan hands and my most intimate spaces.

“Tell me what you want,” he breathes into my ear, then nibbles his way down my jaw to nip my chin.

“Suck you,” is all I can say. I want to tell him more. I want to be very specific about how I want to rip his pants off and feed as much of his cock into my mouth as I can manage. From the feel of things through his clothing and my own, I’m not sure I’ll be able to handle much more than his cockhead. That’s fine with me. I’m pretty certain that will be a tasty playground.

“You want my cock?” he goads. “This big Detrovian cock? You want to *suck* me? *Lick* me? *Taste* me?”

“Mmm-hmm,” I whimper.

This may not be my first time at the rodeo, but I’ve never whimpered before. I’ll take this even farther. I’ll beg.

“Please, Brekk.”

“I’d never turn down such a sweet request. First, I want to get a good look at you, though.”

Look? There isn’t even one lumen of light in here. Or does he have some kind of superhuman alien eyesight?

“Since there’s no light, Bella, I’ll have to look with my fingers.”

I whimper again. Seriously, for monosyllable man, he’s certainly good at filthy talk.

“Let’s get you out of that dress.”

His touch is rough, as if he can barely wait to unwrap me. We work together as he pulls off my dress and uses claws I never noticed before to cut through my tiny white panties.

“Beautiful,” he groans into my ear, although he can’t see a thing.



## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

**B**rekk

I thought once I had my enamored mate alone, knew she was a willing partner in this mating, that my beast would settle down, would let me woo her, at least a little.

Other than allowing me enough of my brain to say words, this new aspect of myself, this feral part of me that has evidently been lurking under my skin for twenty-eight years, won't allow me a moment's peace.

*Breed, breed, breed*, he chants in the back of my mind. When I don't allow him to spear into her without warning, he talks louder. *Fuck, fuck, fuck*, he says as my cock jerks with excitement, spitting precum.

I'm of two minds. There's the bestial aspect of me that insistently wants to burrow into Isabella's channel and pound into her until I spill. Then there's the part of me that is holding onto the tatters of my sanity, reminding me to touch her with

affection, to say words that will remind her I care about more than breeding.

That last part is losing control by the minute.

“You smell so good,” I say as I wrap my palms around her waist. I’m so large and she’s so tiny, I can almost reach all the way around her. “Your hair.” I suck in the essence of her. Even after a long day in this shitty meat packing plant, she smells like wildflowers.

“Are these for me?” I ask as I strum the tightened tips of her breasts.

I want to see them, to know their color, but all I can do is get to know her by feel. Dipping my head lower, I suck one of her nipples into my mouth and moan with the taste of her. She’s so sensitive, she gives me an answering moan as she arches her back and resumes riding my rigid length.

My cock is growing more insistent by the second. The urge to mount her is becoming impossible to contain.

“Let me,” she says as she tries to wriggle her hand between my pants and my skin. “I’ve got to—” Her little palm grips me and she moans so long and low and deep in the back of her throat that she sounds as feral as I feel.

“Fuck!” we both say at the same time.

I’ve never shucked my clothes so quickly, tossing them without care, so there will be nothing between us.

Her tiny hands skate along my heated flesh, exploring every bump and ridge. Every time she touches an especially

sensitive spot, I suck air in through my teeth, and she responds with a soft little hum of appreciation.

“Your touch... feels so good,” I praise.

“Maybe I can see in the dark, too, because your cock is gorgeous, Brekk.”

Her words were bold, but her tone was reserved. I’ll give her encouragement, embolden her.

“What do you see?”

“I’ll get a visual tour, perhaps tomorrow.” I hear a smile in her voice. “Now I’ll steal a taste.”

I should have lapped between her legs. I’ve imagined it a hundred times since we met, but the greedy, feral part of me takes over by lifting her, opening my thighs, and setting her between them—giving her free rein.

“You don’t have to steal if it’s freely given,” I manage to say as she scrambles to her knees, bends to her task, and grips me by the root.

She swipes the head of my cock with her tongue and moans when she gets her first taste of me.

“Brek,” she murmurs, then her tongue swirls and licks, swiping along the ridge of my crown.

The feeling is so exciting, my lids jam closed and my hands tighten into fists. If I don’t keep them in a rigid ball, my bestial side will ram her head down on my shaft. It’s the last thing I want to do.

I keep my hips still so I don't thrust hard and choke her. It's a feat with such a high degree of difficulty I deserve a medal.

"Perfect," I say, finally allowing myself to relax my hands and slide them through her silky hair.

I wonder if males of all species pay more attention to the size of their members than they should. It shouldn't be the measure of a males' worth, but you'd never know that in the locker room or barracks. I've always been proud of my size. I felt I measured up well. Since *desmoni* hit, I'd have to consider my previous size as puny.

Bella's mouth can barely stretch around my head. She can scarcely get her lips farther than my crown, but she's gripping me with both fists along the shaft, working me in smooth motions.

She's the one who deserves a medal.

"I've never..." I have to lick my lips and force my brain to say words. "Never felt anything this amazing in my life."

It becomes more difficult by the second not to thrust more deeply. Before I harm my enamored mate, I pull out and lift her to kiss those lips. My essence has mingled with her saliva. The primal tang of our combined tastes pulls my *desmonic* self closer to the surface.



## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

**I** sabella

In the past, sucking cock has never been my favorite pastime. Guys expect it, though they all seem to be much more excited about receiving oral than giving it.

I've certainly never demanded to suck a guy off before, or felt bereft when he pulled out. There's something about Brekk, though. I could have knelt between his legs all night long, tonguing, titillating, and tasting his essence.

I don't protest when he pulls me off him, though, because he's an amazing kisser. He's so enthusiastic as he delves into me, explores me, tastes me. After dominating my mouth, he pulls back and gently sucks my bottom lip. It's a sexy move, especially when he abandons that task and slides inside to taste me again.

"You're amazing," he says when he pulls away long enough to speak.

Not only is his voice deeper, hoarser, but he seems more powerful, more masculine, more dominant than he's been these last few weeks.

I guess the kissing portion of the evening is over when he lifts me and moves me like a rag doll to lie on the soft bed of clothing, then splits my legs and gets to work. After one long, slow lick from below my core to above my clit, barely grazing the good parts, he moans at the taste of me.

"I've never done this before, Bella. I'm going to make you come, hear you scream my name until your voice is as hoarse as mine. Teach me."

With that, he dips his head and slides that prodigious tongue inside me all the way to the hilt.

"Dear God!" I scream as my nails pierce the skin near his shoulder blades.

He's moaning. It takes me a moment to realize he's not in pain from my nails, he's moaning in pleasure from my taste. There's nothing sexier than a male liking everything about you, from the way you look to the taste of your cream.

I lean back, loosen my grip, and sink into the exquisite pleasure as his tongue delves deep and explores every inch inside me. No guy has discovered my G-spot before, but Brekk not only finds it, he presses hard and flicks with a merciless flutter until I'm writhing on his face.

"Gonna come," I manage to whisper as I clutch my fingers in his hair.

He flicks the spot faster and harder and I widen my thighs, feeling them stretch as the idea of giving myself to him tickles a primitive part of my brain. A thought flies through my mind —*I'm his*. It's this notion that ignites my orgasm.

He rides with me through the rollercoaster of bliss as my hips circle and the tip of his tongue laps with pinpoint accuracy at the sweet spot inside me.

Although it's dark in this metal box, multi-colored fireworks flicker behind my lids, managing to ramp my pleasure even higher as I moan my bliss.

When I finally take a deep breath and my muscles relax so thoroughly I flop against the soft clothes beneath me, he retreats, lifts his head, and places an affectionate kiss on my mound.

“Good?” he asks.

Ridiculous question, but, oh yeah, he said he'd never done that before. He's either a consummate liar, or he's far from the low IQ male I'd pegged him as. That was genius-level cunnilingus he just performed.

“What's the word for the highest praise in your language?” I ask, amazed I could string that many words together in one sentence.

“*Pallientine*.”

“Very, very *pallientine*,” I say, finally coming back to the real world.

His deep chuckle might just be the best sound I've ever heard.



## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

**B**rekk

The bestial part of me that only moments ago was insisting I barge my way into Bella's warm, wet channel, is so thrilled he made her come that he abandons that mission and redoubles his efforts to learn her body.

After finding another spot inside her channel that gives her a thunderous release, I decide to explore the silken folds that surround her slit. I lick and suck and gently tug. Although this makes her hips dance with pleasure, it doesn't get her to the peak. I want to hear her moan and feel her curvy body writhe beneath me again.

"My clit," she urges.

"What?" There's something about the way she says that word, like it's the key a hero hunts for in a fantasy novel, that piques my interest.

"The little lump at the top. It's the most sensitive place on my body."

Both me and my *desmonic* counterpart pay close attention as she grabs my hand, grips my pointer finger, and places it on a tiny mound of flesh. I felt it before on my first sweep of the territory, but didn't think it held any special significance.

"This?" I ask as I press it.

She squeals and scoots away from my touch. Obviously, I misunderstood. Perhaps she mentioned it to make certain I never trespass there.

"It's exquisitely sensitive, Brekk. So responsive that touching it directly is too much. Approach from the side, and only when it's wet."

Wet I can do. Bending to my task, I use the flat of my tongue to slide some of her delicious feminine juices onto the little bump. I take great care to be gentle, so I don't receive another yelp of pain. Her hands lodge in my hair like she's getting ready to hang on for a ride. I like this.

This reminds me of weapons training in the military. The first time I held a laser rifle, I had a feeling of power I'd never felt before. Pulling the trigger and seeing the target explode into bits fed what I now know is the beast inside me.

That was pale in comparison to this.

I learn exactly what my female likes. *My female*. I love those words. I want to have her, own her, *dominate* her. This feeling is not only new, it's so all-consuming I know I will never be able to conquer it.

I test what her little clit likes. Soft? Sometimes. Hard? Sometimes, but never too hard and never right on the most sensitive part.

It's like mastering riding a six-legged *mronck*. To truly be one with the animal takes complete concentration. Although the rider always has to be in command, you have to establish a constant feedback loop to know what the animal needs to hear, to know how to communicate with it.

Bella's little clit tells me what it likes in a dozen different ways. Hip circles are good, hip thrusts are better. Her moans are highly appreciative, and when she sucks her breath in through her teeth, it is the highest praise.

Her nails often tell the tale of how close she is to the precipice, although sometimes it's as if she's forgotten she possesses any limbs at all.

That's when she's flying her highest, when she's literally just her clit and nothing else.

"Fingers," she hisses through numb lips.

I was wrong. Her attention isn't focused on just this needy little lump of flesh, she's also fixating on her hot, wet channel. When I combine what I've learned to do with my mouth and slide into her with my fingers, that's when I wonder if she's still in this room with me.

I picture her flying in the stratosphere, completely untethered from her body and communing with the stars.

Once I learn the key to her body, I refuse to stop. For the first time since I met my bestial self, we are no longer at odds. We're working together to give her this. Over and over.

Finally, she screams my name. Although I was waiting to hear my name on her lips, I don't let it distract me from my mission. I just keep forcing her pleasure higher.

I discover the blueprint to providing more ecstasy. Figure out how to bring her to the heights, push her over the edge, wait until she seems to slip fully back into her body, into her consciousness, then start over again.

Every time I begin again, we start from a higher level of arousal and I find a way to push her to even greater heights.

She's crying now. If I wasn't so in tune with her, I would back away and apologize. Even my feral self had a moment of worry. But she's crying from some emotion so deep, so wide, so utterly feminine I can't imagine it. By the way her body shakes and moans and spasms, though, I don't worry that she's not experiencing the ultimate ecstasy.

Finally, when I imagine we've both quit counting how many times she's danced among the stars, she gently presses my head away.

"Brek," she whispers as she snuggles next to me in our nest of furs. "Brek."



## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

**I** sabella

People go to monasteries and ashrams to get to this state of nothingness. I strived for it in my early twenties, meditating an hour a day. I never got this far.

No words. No thoughts. Just being one with the universe. I don't know my name, can't think of nouns or verbs or adjectives. I simply *am*.

Finally, after long minutes, my brain comes back online. I'm in this safe metal cocoon with Brekk. I'm cuddled next to his gorgeous purple body. He's stroking my hair, peppering me with the sweetest lippy kisses from my shoulders, to the divot at the base of my throat, along my jawline, and behind my ear.

It's a circuit of tender attention that is so sweet it almost brings tears to my eyes. I just cried and screamed until my throat was raw, though. No tears come, but my emotions are vulnerable, tender.

“Brek.” I love saying his name. Possibly because, even though I can’t see him, I know it lights him up inside.

“Did you dance among the stars, pretty Bella?”

“I have no words, Brek. I’ve never been there before. It was... otherworldly. I feel so close to you.”

He’s too huge to pull toward me, so I cuddle even closer to him and take a deep whiff of his skin. I want to burrow even closer.

When I cup his cheek, my palm encounters those odd prosthetic bumps. I picture those hideous growths on his gorgeous face and wonder what he’ll look like in his dreadful makeup when someone finally springs us from our little prison.

We’re front to front, so sweaty we’re suctioned together. His cock is drumming an insistent beat against my belly.

“Your turn, Brek. You deserve to dance among the stars too.”

“You’re tired. You need your rest,” he says, his voice soft and sincere, although by the way his sex pulses against me, I think it has a different opinion.

“I just got my second wind,” I say, though I doubt the translator got the idiom right.

I pull away forcefully enough to uncouple our suction, then lie on my back.

“Let’s see how you and I fit together, big guy. My parents didn’t raise a quitter.” I arch an eyebrow as I toss him a smile.

Too bad he can't see it.

Not needing a second invitation, he surges between my legs so fast it's as if he teleported. He notches himself at my entrance, which is still wet from all my orgasms. Then I feel him stop in mid-thrust, as if he's having an argument with himself.

"You're sure you're ready, little Earther? You're so tiny, and I'm so large."

"Give it your best shot."

He moans low in the back of his throat as he pulses into me. Lingering at my entrance, he teases me as his palms trace my body, sliding over my sweat-sheened skin like he wants to remind himself who he's having sex with. Since he can't see me, he wants to feel me.

I cup his ass cheeks and press him closer, giving him silent permission to not hold back. Yet he pauses as he buries himself deeper in tiny increments.

"Ohh," I moan.

It no longer feels like we've known each other only a matter of weeks. There's something about what we just shared that bound us together, body and soul.

My grip on him becomes a tether. I hold on for dear life as he surges into me. When all of his cockhead is inside me, something breaks loose inside my heart. I no longer feel separation. We're twined together.

He's big. Bigger than he has a right to be. Yet everything is perfect. The stretch is perfect. The pleasure/pain is perfect.

We're merging.

He feels it, too. I can tell.

"Bella," he whispers, as if he just recited an entire book containing his feelings for me.

"Brek.".

His entry takes a lifetime as we work together, my hips lifting, his hips pressing. Every hard-fought inch reaps its own rewards. Having him inside me, even without friction, is its own kind of heaven.

"Good." I answer his unspoken question.

When he's in to the hilt, he stops moving, letting us both get accustomed to the tight fit. I pretend I can look into his lovely lavender eyes, just as I know with certainty that he's looking at me as if he can see me, too.

When he slides out, I feel every bump and ridge on his gargantuan member. Nothing this side of paradise could feel this good.

After a few of these warm-up thrusts, when we know how well we fit together, he increases his tempo.

We're wordless. He doesn't need to ask if I'm okay. He trusts me to tell him with hands or hips if something isn't right. And I trust him to stop immediately if he causes pain.

But he doesn't. How could bliss this intense turn into anything but greater bliss?

Now that he's discovered the pleasure my clit is capable of giving me, he angles his hips at just the right angle to rub me on every in- and out-stroke.

Nothing. Nothing on Earth or anywhere in the universe has ever felt this amazing.

When he was pleasuring me, it was apparent how much joy he took in giving it to me. Now I pretend I'm inside his skin, feeling his ecstasy rise higher and higher with every thrust.

He's grunting now, slamming into me with delight. Every smooth drive pushes us both higher until I scream his name and spiral into my bliss.

He falls over the edge right after me with a feral moan that belongs in the mouth of a wild animal. It excites me even more.

His warm jets spray my internal walls as I spasm in bliss, then he shudders as his body finds a way to squeeze even more pleasure out of our joining.

He plops next to me with an exhausted groan. Instead of answering him in kind, I laugh.

It's not a little laugh, nor a polite laugh. It's deep, from my belly, as if so much pleasure has been wrung from my body its only response is to express my happiness, my heartfelt joy, with the sweet rumble of my amusement.



## CHAPTER NINETEEN

**B**rekk

My *desmonic* self is finally silent, sated for the first time since he made his appearance. He seems as happy to have her in his arms as I am.

I got used to her screams and moans and shocked gasps when I took her higher than she'd been before. I must admit, her laughter surprised me. Then I joined her. What a joy to discover each other. To mesh the way only two enamored mates can.

She snuggles even closer and, although there's nothing sexual about it, my feral self pushes to the front and cuddles her harder. Good. He loves her, too.

It surprises me to think that thought, use that word. But it's accurate. I have no reason to doubt it. I won't presume to think she feels the same about me, but by the tightness of her grip and the decibel level of her laughter, I know she feels affection. That's a good place to start.

It's clear the moment she falls to sleep as her muscles relax and her breathing deepens. I kiss her hair and slide my clawed fingers through it. That was a surprise. It's a good thing they retract. It would have taken half the fun out of pleasuring her.

It's only now that I let my guard down that all of my fears fly at me like the specters in what Bella calls the ghost room.

As wonderful as I just made her feel, it won't compensate for what will happen when she sees my *desmonic* face.

The database said having an unrequited enamored mate would be painful for years, possibly until death. But the pain seems like a small problem compared to the idea of not having Bella as my mate.

The physical pain of withdrawal will be nothing next to the emotional pain of losing her.

I've been aloof, trying to keep my distance because I didn't want to bond with her. All the articles said only a Detrovian female could be my enamored mate. That has changed now. I can have fun with her, spend more time with her, *laugh* with her. That was so unexpected a moment ago when she broke out in giggles. I want to hear more of it.

Then the drumbeat of worry pounds louder in my brain. From when they're schoolgirls, Detrovian females know what to expect from their mate after midnight. What will Bella think when she sees me?

I get no sleep at all as these worry-thoughts fly through my mind all night long.

My body must know the time even though my wrist-comm isn't working, because I morph back into my regular visage. It must be dawn.

I feel my face itch, and when I go to scratch it, all the bumps have disappeared. My claws are no longer able to extrude. The only remnants of my *desmonic* self that remain are my fangs.

Bella wakes and her muscles tighten. Is she having second thoughts about what we shared last night? She turns, bends her leg and sets it on my hip, and leans closer.

"Last night wasn't a dream, was it?" she asks, her voice still lazy from sleep.

"Yes. The dream of a lifetime," I answer.

"I'm still giddy from it," she says as she lays her palm on my cheek. "All those awful bumps are gone?"

"I pulled them off while you slept."

We laze and pet each other, working toward another intimate moment when the door to the walk-in slams open. I hadn't expected anyone for hours since people don't arrive for makeup and costumes until late afternoon.

"Oh! Sorry!" It's Freenie, our chief costumer. "Sorry, sorry." She puts her hands in front of her face as if she could shield herself from catching the sight of two naked bodies in a messy nest of clothing.

"Sorry, sorry," fills the air as the three of us scramble to make things right. Freenie steps out. Bella and I rummage through a mound of costumes to find our own clothes.

“Sorry. Two people said their costumes ripped and needed sewing.” Freenie’s voice is softer, as if she’s at the far end of the huge room.

“Fuck it,” Bella whispers. “I can’t find my bra, and these...” she holds up the tiny white panties I cut with my claw, “need to go in your pocket since I don’t have one.”

“I-I can just come back later,” Freenie calls from the hanging-meat-hook room.

“Give us a minute,” Bella calls. “We got locked in and it got... hot in here.”

This sends us both into a fit of giggles.

“Hot indeed,” I chuckle.

When we’re both dressed, Bella captures my arm and pulls me close before we leave the room. “That was... spectacular,” she says without hesitation.

Could it be all my fears were baseless?

As she pulls me into the main room, she says, “Maybe I could see you tonight? After we close?”

I nod eagerly.

“Just be sure to take off your hideous makeup first.”



## CHAPTER TWENTY

**I**sabella

“Thanks so much for putting this on, the kids had a blast,” says Miss Pfaff, the yellow avian drama teacher.

“Yes, thanks Miss Martinez,” sings a chorus of high schoolers in full zombie makeup.

I’ve been hearing this all night long. Between all the heartfelt thank yous and the nearly 70,000 credit donation we’ll make to the Children’s Hospital, you’d think I’d be floating on air this last night of our Haunted House.

Well, you’d be wrong.

I’m not floating on air. I’m sad.

Brekk and I parted ways early enough on Saturday morning for me to get a long nap before I returned to the meat-packing plant that night. I’d texted him a few times on his wrist-comm that afternoon, but when he didn’t respond, I figured he must still be napping.

I really didn't get worried about what was going on with him until he arrived that night. He mumbled something about the site being open until 1:00 a.m. and said he worked a deal with Threxil to take his part, choosing to wear the disgusting makeup as opposed to sitting on the sidelines managing managing things.

That was fine. Maybe he discovered scaring the crap out of people was his calling. No big deal. It's just that I thought we'd connect after the last patron was turned away that night. I was wrong. By the time everything was tidied up, Brekk was nowhere to be found.

By noon today, it was very clear Brekk was ghosting me. No comms, no contact, nothing for over a day? Something is wrong.

My stomach has been in knots since I accepted the incontrovertible fact that Brekk wants nothing to do with me, even after all we shared the other night in our *nest*.

I've never been in this situation before. I never wanted to have sex with a guy and have him not talk to me after that. That's why I usually waited to have sex until after a few dates. It allowed me to get a handle on whether or not the guy was into me.

Brekk was a miscalculation. A giant one. My guts are torn to shreds, not just because I had sex with him and now he doesn't even want to be in the same room with me. It's because I was falling for the guy.

Who am I kidding? I *fell* for the guy, as in *already fallen*.

“Isabella? I know you must be tired after three back-to-back days of managing this controlled chaos, but may I have a word?” It’s Mayor Alderon.

“Sure,” I say, even as I keep an eye on Brekk. I’m going to grab him before he has a chance to make a run for his hover. I need closure. “What can I do for you, Mayor?”

“I just wanted to tell you what an unexpected pleasure it’s been to watch you take the helm of this Empty Penis event. I must admit, especially with a name like that, I didn’t think you would get much attendance.”

I bite back my moan of exasperation. I thought I’d fixed all audio and visual ads to reflect the Spooky Holiday rebranding. Crap.

“The amount of money you raised for the hospital is to be commended. And as you know, Arixxia Fields thrives on tourism. In another year or two, this event will bring people in from afar. That’s always good for the bottom line.”

The gorgeous blue mayor winks at me. If I wasn’t jonesing for a certain purple male, I’d definitely be flirting with Alderon right now.

“So kudos to you, and I’ll be bold enough to ask you to reprise your role. On behalf of Arixxia Fields, I’d love to have you do another haunted house next year. I might just be able to get you some seed money to make it bigger, better, and scarier.” Another wink. Wow, whoever gets him is going to get a catch.

“Thanks. It’s been fun, but let me give it some thought.”

Shit! Is Brekk making a run for it? Ass.

By the time I help Freenie box up the costumes, and I ensure the students have swept every floor, it's obvious a certain handsome purple male has left the building.

As I turn out the lights for the last time, I square my shoulders. I not only have a plan, I have the balls to put it into action.



## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

**B**rekk

“How are you managing?” Harrid asks after knocking on my door.

He and Dacia have been amazing ever since they invited me here upon my release from the service. They’ve been supportive every step of the way.

I wasn’t going to tell them I went through the change. Frankly, I doubted they’d believe me because the Database mentions it can only strike Detrovian couples.

Dacia and Harrid found out by accident, similar to the first time I saw my father. Harrid and I made simultaneous runs to the kitchen for a snack. To say he was shocked is an understatement.

Although I’d hoped he would keep it between us, the first words out of his mouth were to call Dacia from their bedroom.

The next thing I knew, it was two in the morning and we were strategizing around the kitchen table. I’ve never thought

myself a particularly stubborn person before, but nothing they said or did could budge me off my insistence that I would not contact Bella again.

“She deserves to know,” Dacia said, her voice so calm you’d think she was being logical.

“She’s not a Detrovian. She didn’t grow up seeing her father in his bestial form. The word ‘hideous’ has escaped her lips on more than one occasion when she was referencing a computerized rendering of *me*.”

I was indignant, feeling I shouldn’t have to say anything more. My refusal to tell Bella was self-explanatory.

“She should have a choice,” Dacia insisted, her shoulders squared in a posture that reminded me of the little Earther.

“You... shared a night together,” Harrid said, his tone of voice indicating he had a good idea of *everything* we shared that night. “You tell us she’s a nice female. She must have feelings for you, doesn’t she?”

“Hideousssss. That was her word. She repeated it on more than one occasion.” It’s all I feel I need to say.

“Has she tried to contact you?” Dacia asked innocently, as if she already knew the answer.

“Yes, but it’s only because she doesn’t know the truth about this.” I waved my hand in a circle in front of my hideous, *desmonic* face.

“It’s late,” Harrid pronounced. “We’re all going to get some sleep. But Brekk? This isn’t over. Dacia and I were separated

for a few nights right after my change hit. It was excruciating. You shouldn't condemn yourself to a lifetime of this without at least trying to sort things out."

I took the opportunity to leave the kitchen without arguing, but I had no intention of "sorting things out." My decision was made.

Harrid knocks again, bringing me back to the present. "Did you sleep okay? Want to talk?"

I most certainly do not want to talk. It will be as productive as our discussion last night, which is to say—not productive at all.

"I'm fine," I say. My tone is clear that the subject is closed.

I hear a commotion outside my door. It's not Harrid, but two female voices. I know them both: Dacia and Bella.

"I know he's here. His hover is outside," Bella insists. I can picture her, her adorable pointed chin thrust upward in defiance. "I want to speak to him."

Perhaps if I had been more conciliatory last night, Dacia and Harrid would run interference for me. As it is, I can't expect any assistance on their end.

"Brek? I know you're in there. Come out and talk."

I stand behind my door, arms crossed, shaking my head with no intention of leaving my room until she adds, "Please."

It undoes me.

“Minute,” is all I call as I jam my legs into clean pants, pull on a shirt, and drag a brush through my hair.

You’d never know I saw her just last night at the Haunted House. Seeing her is like being struck with a war hammer in the chest.

“Isabella,” I say with a nod.

“Brek.”

I manage to keep my voice calm and unemotional. Isabella doesn’t. Her soft Earther voice broke just saying the one syllable of my name. Shit. Whatever it is she wants, she’s won already.



## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

**I** sabella

I got no sleep last night after we closed the Haunted House. I'm tired and look like shit. But worst of all, I've never begged a guy before. This doesn't feel good. Not at all. I need closure, though. You don't share a night like we did in the meat locker and not exchange another word. I can't let things end without at least an explanation.

"Thanks for letting me in," I say to his sister- and brother-in-law, with whom I barely make introductions. "Brek, I wonder if you'd take a drive with me?" I leave off the "so we can talk." Since I decided he has a triple-digit IQ, I'm sure he knows I don't want to see the fall foliage.

"Mmph," he says with a nod.

I'll take that for a yes.

Minutes later, we're in my little red hover, flying toward the falls he described the other night. He made it sound spectacular. We might as well take a look.

Not one word is exchanged on the ride, which takes the better part of an hour. I can feel his eyes on me, though. His reflexes are amazing. The moment I turn my head to catch him in the act, though, he's looking out the nav screen as if it's the most interesting thing in the universe.

My body yearns for him. Seriously, it's not just that I've fallen for him, that I have feelings for the male. My traitorous body is leaning toward him as if he's a magnet and I'm a pile of metal shavings. Damn him anyway.

I hadn't realized I'd gotten such a late start. It makes sense. I was exhausted after three days of the Haunted House, micromanaging almost a hundred performers. It's almost dusk when we arrive.

I pull out the thick, red-plaid blanket I brought and set us near the edge of the precipice on the bluff overlooking river down below.

"I've never been here before," I say, looking at the falls. "You were right. It's beautiful."

Yes, it's beautiful with the water rushing over the top, a faint rainbow shimmering through the droplets of spray, and the banks of the river edged with the remnants of colored leaves on the deciduous trees.

But all the beauty doesn't explain the melancholy tone of my voice. This is going to be our goodbye. I straighten my shoulders. This is what I wanted. I'll have closure. It's the least I deserve.

His eyes are on me again. I can feel his gaze like a living thing.

“Thanks for coming,” I say.

*Bella, that was so fucking lame.*

“We should talk,” he says as if he’s the one who came up with the idea.

I’m not going to let him hijack the discussion, though. I barge ahead. “Care to explain why you ghosted me?” I didn’t want to be accusatory, yet those were the first words to escape my lips. I’m going to botch this. Badly.

“Ghost?”

He tips his head, which is freaking adorable. He’s not only the handsomest male on the planet, he has to be adorable too? Life isn’t fair.

“Like the actors you had wearing white sheets and making woo-woo noises?” he asks with another head tilt.

“No. Ghosting means just slipping away from a...” I can’t use the word relationship. We fucked. My girlfriends back on Earth always used to remind me that fucking does not a relationship make. A failure to understand that fact is the pathway to heartache. “Slipping away after you fuck,” I amend.

There. That was blunt and doesn’t give away just how tender my feelings are about what happened between us.

Ah. That got to him. His head tipped back in surprise when I used the f-word like our time together meant nothing.

“I thought it would be best if we didn’t see each other anymore,” he says like our time together did, indeed, mean nothing.

Great. This is going well.

“So... what we shared in the meat locker was just...” I can’t say it.

“Very, very enjoyable. Thank you.”

Is he describing mind-altering sex or a sandwich? Enjoyable? I danced among the fucking stars!

“So, that’s it, Brekk?”

“Yes, Bella. I’m sorry if my interest in you implied... further endeavors.”

Many, many bad words fly through my mind. Many expletives. Oh, and the thought of pushing him over the side of the precipice into the roiling waters down below takes up waaay too much of my thoughts. For a moment. Then I gather control. It’s nice I can gather something, because I can no longer gather my self-esteem. That was lost the moment I knocked on his door today expecting anything other than what I just got.

“I guess I should get you back to your house.”

I stand, shake out the blanket, taking care to keep my back ramrod straight and my face on lockdown, and fold it into a

neat little square. We walk to my hover and belt in. He doesn't try to open my door for me, which is good, because it would be too tempting to knee him in the balls.

When I press the ignition, nothing happens.



## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

**B**rek

God should strike me down for this. Surely, this is the worst thing I've ever done. And no one deserves this treatment less than Isabella. The only way I'll be able to live with myself is my firm belief I'm doing her a favor. Why let her affection for me grow when she won't be able to bear to looking at me in my *desmonic* form?

The sooner we get home, the sooner I can let down this façade of not caring and allow my heart to crumble into a thousand pieces.

I climb into the hover, knowing I'll spend the ride home breathing deeply of her scent, memorizing it enough to last the rest of my life. Detrovians only get one enamored mate. Bella's it, and I can't have her.

She's looking at me as if she's waiting for a response.

"What?"

“I asked if you know anything about hovers. This isn’t turning on.”

If she were a different type of person, I’d think she did this on purpose, but Bella would never do such a thing.

I know nothing about engines, but desperation makes me climb out of the hover and check the messon repressor, the gradient charger, and the drift stabilizer. It’s all I know to do. None of it causes the motor to turn over.

“I have no idea what’s wrong,” I tell her, a look of regret on my face.

“Sometimes if you just wait a while, it will work,” she says. “I’ll try again in a few minutes.”

She tries and waits three times before she gives up. It’s fully dark outside now, with only three hours until midnight. I’m not panicked. Frankly, I’ve enjoyed being in her company this extra hour. Not that we’ve said a word to each other. I just like catching glimpses of her out of the corner of my eye.

“I’ll call Harrid,” I say. “He and Dacia will pick us up, and you can sort your hover out in the morning.” I almost reach over and touch her arm to reassure her, but pull back at the last second. Neither of us needs one touch of flesh on flesh. I certainly don’t. Who knows, it might wake my inner beast, and I clearly don’t want to do that.

“Sure,” Harrid says when my comm gets through. “It takes about an hour, right? Just relax. Dacia and I will be there soon.”

Isabella heard our conversation and looks relieved. I, on the other hand, do not. This is final. In two hours, I'll never see Bella again. Somehow, this makes everything real. My feelings for her are so deep, I'm not sure how I'll be able to tolerate saying goodbye for the last time.

I'm surprised when, a few minutes later, my comm pings. Seeing it's from Harrid, I put it on speaker.

"Can you believe it? What are the odds that the moment someone has an urgent need for our help, we forgot to plug the hover into the charger? No problem, though. We'll put it on quick charge and be on our way within the hour."

"Should we... call a taxi?" I ask, worrying about the timing.

"No!" It's Dacia's voice in the background. "It has half a charge. I just didn't want to go all that way without a full charge. We'll be on our way soon. No worries."

Bella and I sit in the hover for long minutes, both looking through the front nav screen at the moonlit scenery. Finally, she says, "Since we've got some time, should we get comfortable on the blanket? Look at the stars? I won't bug you, Brekk. You've got free will. You don't want to be with me. I get it."

Without waiting for me to answer, she reaches into the tiny backseat, grabs the blanket, and leaves the hover to spread it out in the exact place we just vacated.



## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

**I** sabella

It's freeing actually, having been given the boot by Brekk. I got my answers. He's just not that into me. Maybe at some point in the future—way in the future—we might even be friends. I've discovered he's an amazing guy. He was by far the best spooky actor in the entire meat packing plant.

Maybe he feels the same relieved too, because he's more relaxed. All the awkwardness has faded away. He's sitting on the blanket, leaned back on his elbows, looking at the stars.

"I know the constellations on Detrov, but I'm clueless about Hallion's night sky. It's pretty here, though," he says as if we're no longer lovers but have shifted into best friends.

I mirror his posture and look at the stars. It's so dark here away from the small city of Arixxia, the night sky is jammed with stars. Soon we're pointing out configurations.

"There's the dragon of bjorn," I say as I trace what looks to me like dragon's wings.

“I see it,” he says excitedly. “And there, there’s Mellonga’s hair.”

Sure enough, it looks like a dozen strands of hair gently swaying in a breeze.

Soon we’re talking about nothing, laughing occasionally, and easing toward each other on the blanket. It’s toward the end of autumn and getting cooler by the second. When I wiggle and try to ease the blanket over my shoulders, it seems like the most natural thing in the world for him to sling his arm around me and pull me close.

“Just to keep you warm, Bella,” he says, but damn, his voice has that rough tone I discovered in the meat locker.

I’m thinking about leaning in to kiss him when we’re interrupted by his comm.

“We’re on our way,” Dacia says, her voice unnaturally perky.

“Don’t worry,” Harrid says, “We’ll be there well before midnight.”

“They sound like you’ll turn into a pumpkin at midnight,” I quip, but I’m sure it’s lost in the translation because Brekk looks worried. “It’s an Earth thing. An old fairytale,” I tell him, then cuddle closer.

We have an hour until they get here. We’re already cuddled together. I know he has no feelings for me, but his body hasn’t gotten the message. Even in the dim moonlight, I can see his cock jerking against the confines of his pants.

“What would be the harm in kissing?” I ask, then realize the words actually came out of my mouth. Those were supposed to be *thoughts*. As I groan at my stupidity, his body stills, he looks, really looks, at me for the first time in an hour, and eases his lips toward mine.

He’s giving me every opportunity to tell him to stop. Every opportunity to back away or make an excuse or move to the shelter of the hover because it’s cold out here. I stay right where I am, then ease toward him.

He’s so handsome, it’s hard to take my gaze from him, but at the last moment, I shutter my lids and fall fully into the kiss.

His lips are perfect. Pillow soft yet firm at the same time. My body, which had been in stand-down mode since he told me in no uncertain terms he wasn’t interested in me, is now on fire for him. It’s like the anticipation of this kiss flicked my off switch to on.

Energy pools in my pelvis, swirls in my clit, makes my channel quiver, and perks my nipples into diamond-hard points.

He’s not immune, either. He huffs out a soft breath, then claims my mouth as he envelops me in his arms and pulls me onto his lap all in one smooth move.

Has it only been three days since we kissed? It feels like an eternity since I was in his arms, since our tongues entwined, since my body thrummed with the excitement only Brekk can create.

We can break up again tomorrow. Or maybe we don't need to. I guess we both know this is just sex, nothing more. No affection, just two bodies that can't get enough of each other. I'll take it. Take all of this I can get.

I shift from grazing his cock with my hip to straddling him, then cling for dear life to those wide shoulders so full of muscle they could be carved from granite.

"Brek." I can't help but say his name. It's not like I'm declaring my undying devotion. It's just five little letters.

After pressing my slit against the hard ridge in his jeans, I wait, listening for his protest, waiting for him to dump me off his lap and onto the blanket. On the contrary, he tucks me closer and rubs me against him.

"Bella!"

Damn. I wish I could read his mind. How could he brush me off so coldly just an hour ago and now be desperate for me? He's riding me, or maybe I'm riding him. I don't know. Does it matter? Fuck, it's too delicious.

I don't know who starts ripping clothes off first. I'm too distracted to pay attention—or to care. But soon we're naked in the moonlight.

"Brek." I want to tell him how beautiful he is, how gorgeous his face is, how perfect his body, but I change my mind and put my mouth to better use as I kiss my way between his pecs, over his washboard abs, past the trail of hair below his naval to the object of all my fantasies.

I worry that Harrid and Dacia will interrupt us, but we're out in the middle of nowhere. We'll see their hover lights before they see us.

With those concerns out of the way, Brekk and I get down to it. No words are spoken, no recriminations or warnings or reminders that this means nothing. He made himself clear, but I can enjoy our coupling, can't I?

Many orgasms later, I've sucked him to take the edge off and he's shown me he hasn't forgotten any of the techniques he perfected on how to make his mouth perform magic between my legs.

Just as I'm thinking it's been more than an hour, Brekk groans. I thought I was an expert on all his moans. The little ones that tell me he's loving what I'm doing but wants me to move faster or give him more pressure. The louder ones that warn me he's going to come, and I'd better pull off or I'm going to get a mouthful of his essence—I never pull off. The urgent ones that aren't so much about him, but are to help me let loose and have just one more release.

No, this groan isn't like any of those. It's a noise of pain. A lot of pain.

I back away from him to make sure I'm not squishing him, and watch as he jackknifes forward, then throws himself backward. His face is in a tight rictus of pain as his moans get louder.

"Brekk?" I ask, but he's in too much agony to speak. Where the hell are Dacia and Harrid?

My palm flies to cover my mouth as I watch him change. It's like something out of a vid. He's morphing like one of those sequences of a man changing into a werewolf. Only he's not changing into a wolf, he's changing into that hideous face he drew for me at the abandoned plant.

It's exactly the same as the one he wore the night we made love: bumps around the eye sockets and on the forehead, skin the color of eggplant instead of his beautiful fuchsia. It's like something out of a spooky movie. Only it's really happening.



## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

**B**rek

Fuck. It's happening. Time slipped away from me and my *desmonic* self has clawed himself to the fore. I palm my face, though it's unnecessary, to discover if this is real. I don't need to feel the bumps to know the truth of it. The look of disgust on Bella's face tells me all I need to know.

Hideous.

In the service, I fought in two deadly campaigns, but right now is the first time I've had the thought of running from anything.

"Brek?" her voice is pitiful, terrified. The look on her face will be etched in my mind until my end of days. It's not the way anyone would want their beloved to gaze upon them.

I'm still panting from the agony of the metamorphosis. Unable to speak. The moment I regain my composure, I explain.

"This. This is what happens to Detrovians when they find their enamored mate. Every night for the rest of my life, I will change into this because I'm now mated to you. I return to my

other form at dawn. Hideous, I know,” I say so she doesn’t feel the need to speak it out loud.

I’d uncurled from the fetal position I was in during the change, and am lying on my side. Now I ease myself to a sitting position to watch her. I can’t look for long. It’s too heartbreaking to see her look of disgust, so I glance at my lap, my erection long gone.

She looked so upset I might have to stay the night here while Dacia and Harrid shuttle her back to town. She probably won’t want to be in the same hover as me.

She eases closer, slowly lifts her hand, and skates her fingers along the bumps and craters of my face.

“It’s okay, Bella. I know I repulse you. You don’t have to look.” Where’s the damn hover? This interaction, seeing her affection spool out of her as she inspects me, is far more painful than the metamorphosis.

I pull her hand from my cheek. “It’s okay, Bella. I understand. You can wait in the hover. I won’t bother—”

She doesn’t rise and run from me. On the contrary, she leans close and... kisses me. The first one is so quick it makes a smacking sound. Then she warms to her task, lingering, brushing, licking the seam of my lips, then pressing her tongue inside as her palm returns to the heinous dots and ridges on my cheek.

“This is you, Brekk? The flesh and blood male I made love to in the meat locker?”

I nod.

“I have one question. I need one answer, but please make it the truth.”

“Okay.”

“Is this why you ghosted me?”

“Yes.”

My body just went through agony, but it didn't hurt as much as the pain expressed on her beautiful face.

“I... I called this hideous?” She moves closer, so both palms bracket my cheeks. “I'm so sorry, Brekk. My comment must have hurt you so much when I was really trying to compliment you on an amazing makeup job.”

I don't answer.

“This beautiful face? This face that gave me so much pleasure? This face, these lips that said such sweet words to me when we shared the night together in that nest of clothes?”

The moonlight exposes her eyes shimmering with silvery tears.

“How could a male be hideous when his mind is so beautiful?”

She's crying now, tears snaking down her cheeks, her face clenched with sadness.

She slides onto my lap, straddling me again, but with none of the lust of moments ago. She's right here, inches from my face, still cupping my cheeks so gently it's as if she's afraid to hurt me.

“I lied. I said I had only one question, but I have another. Can you give me one more exquisitely honest answer?”

“Yes.”

“Do you... do you have feelings for me, Brekk?”

I pull her tight, so tight I’m afraid I might hurt her, but I can’t control the need to erase any air that separates us. I press my face to her throat, the column of her neck, and feel the blood pumping in her carotid. Honesty is a synonym for vulnerability, but I owe her nothing less than the truth.

“I love you, Bella. I always will.”

She pulls away. For a moment I worry she’ll break my heart again, but she’s only far enough from me to look into my eyes.

“You’re not hideous to me, Brekk. You’re beautiful. So beautiful. In both forms. Inside and out. Can we start over? Will you give me another chance?”

“I love you, Bella. Of course I will.”

“And did I hear the word ‘mate’ come out of your mouth a moment ago?”

“That’s a fact. Detrovians only get one in a lifetime. You’re it for me.”

“Good, because you’re it for me, too.”



**I** sabella

“No,” I say loudly, so my entire army of zombies can hear me over the wailing of the banshees in the next room. “You put your arms out in front of you, you must shuffle, and you say the word ‘brains’ in English. Don’t worry. It will translate, but you have to say ‘brains’.”

As almost every senior in Arixxia High follows my instructions, I take a moment to reflect on the last year of my life.

Amazing, wonderful, exceeds expectations. All the superlatives in the world won’t do justice to the best time of my life.

I can’t help but think back to that night when Brekk and I worked everything out. I’d just realized he and I were living out Beauty and the Beast in 3D and living color when his sister- and brother-in-law showed up.

I hadn't even gotten over my shock at seeing another eggplant-colored bumpy Detrovian face when the two of them howled with laughter. The joke was on us. Their hover had a full charge from the get-go. They just made us wait almost three hours to pick us up, so Brekk would have to change in front of me.

"We wanted nature to take its course," Harrid had said with a laugh. "No enamored mate can say no to her male when he's in his beast form. Am I right?"

Ha ha. Very funny. But since then I've thanked them both a dozen times. If I hadn't seen Brekk change, we wouldn't be together today.

His original plan had been to recover from ten years in the military and two tours of duty, then go back to Detrov to find his mate. Since leaving Hallion to find a mate was no longer necessary, we gave serious thought to where to go next.

My social media management job can be performed anywhere, so I was game to go to Detrov. It was Brekk who wanted to stay. His parents are dead and he's close to Dacia, Harrid, and their adorable daughter, Aleese. They're my best friends, too. And the Haunted House had netted Brekk and me an amazing support system.

Garrex and Brekk had become friendly, so it seemed a great idea when Garrex asked him to join the fire department. It's been a perfect fit.

This year's Haunted House is in the crumbling old hospital on the outskirts of town. I've seen enough spooky movies to give

me a thousand ideas for not only this Empty Penis holiday, but for years to come, because Mayor Alderon told me we can have this place for as many years as I want.

We've got twice the volunteers as last year, and with a bigger advertising budget, we're planning on doubling our donation to the Children's Hospital. I'm super excited.

After urging the kids to shuffle slower, my thoughts again drift to that night a year ago. My heart squeezes when I think we might have missed the opportunity of a lifetime because of poor communication.

We agreed that's the last time we keep secrets from each other.

Well... my hand slides to my belly and I can't keep a sly smile from brightening my face. I've got one secret I've been keeping, but I'm going to tell him tonight.

Since we're the first interspecies mates of his kind, we have no idea just what type of little bun is baking in my oven, but that's just the point. Who cares? It's what's on the inside that counts.

**The End**



I hope you enjoyed Brekk. If you've read my other books, you might have noticed I tend toward a bit of angst. That this book was basically angst-free made writing *Brekk*, even more fun.

Want a free extra epilogue? Follow this link to get a FREE peek into what Brekk and Bella's baby might look like. It's a super fun little extra scene.

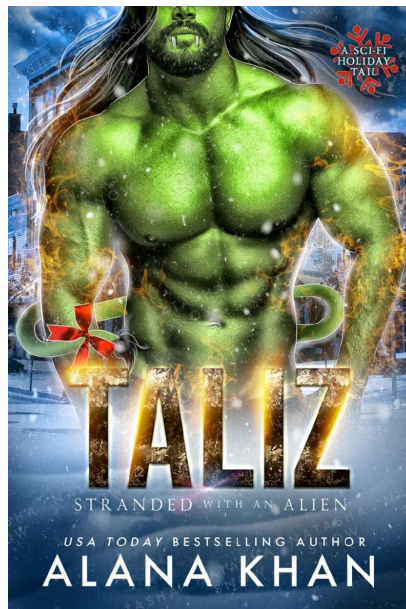
*Taliz*, *Stranded with an Alien*, is the next book in the series. It will be up for pre-order shortly. It, too, is set on Hallion, and you'll get to enjoy the huge Jule celebration with the town of Arixxia Falls, which changes its name for the holiday to Frosttown. Keep scrolling for the first chapter of *Taliz*.

Please sign up for my newsletter to be the first to know about upcoming books, get access to free chapters and deleted scenes, cover reveals, and fun contests.

Happy Holidays to all of you.

Alana

# TALIZ SNEAK PEEK



## **Taliz**

Arixxia Fields: A Steamy Small Town Alien Romance

Book Two

By

Alana Khan

## Chapter One

### **Planet Hallion**

### **Sometime in the Future**

### **Zaydie**

“Sorry. Can not do.”

“What?” I ask the khaki-colored hover driver as he eyes me over his shoulder. “I distinctly asked if you could drive me to this address, wait half an hour, then take me to check in at my hotel in Frosttown.”

“And I say yes. That three hours ago, before winter storm come too soon.”

I roll my eyes. We have interstellar travel, hovers, and food made from machines, yet we can’t predict the weather. Irritating.

“Would an extra...” I’m doing higher mathematics in my head as I calculate how much I can bribe him and still have fun on this vacation. “An extra 50 credits make it worth your while?”

“No. Look at sky. No time to argue. Will be stranded if waste time arguing.”

He exits the hover and stomps to my door, opening it with a bang, then gives me a get-out-of-the-cab glare. It’s made all the more scary by his large brown pupilless bulging eyes.

When I don't hop to it, he leans in, grabs my hover suitcase, and yanks it over my lap. Little Syzz gives an indignant yelp when the big alien jiggles his carry bag.

I must be lagged from travel, because the impact of this situation is only now dawning on me.

"So, you're saying if you stay half an hour, you'll be stranded here? That means *I'll* be stranded! Just put my bag back inside and take me to Frostown. I'll have to do this interview another day."

"Can not do. Going home to Diotera. Wrong direction." He shakes his warty head, making me glad he was facing the other way for the duration of our trip from the transport hub.

"Okay. Just take me to Diotera. I'll get a hotel there," I say, seeing my non-refundable Frostown hotel deposit flying out the window. This allegedly career-enhancing gig is going to wind up costing me money.

"Can not do. I live on farm. No hotels near. Closest is Frostown."

Crap. I'd like to argue, but we're already going in circles and the first fluffy snowflake just landed on his hover windshield.

"Out!"

He grabs my upper arm and is about to yank me out the hover door when a deep bass voice commands, "Take your hands off her."

I can't see who the voice belongs to, but when the driver glances over his shoulder, he immediately loosens his grip.

“No problem... Sir.”

Raising his hands in a “don’t shoot” pose, he steps away from the hover.

“Just helping female out. Need go home before storm.”

No wonder his tone softened and he unhandled me. Standing behind him is a Khal-rah. A huge, horned, fanged Khal-rah whose tail is flicking angrily.

“Take me with you,” I eke out in a whisper to the driver.

“Zaydie Mellior? You’re right on time,” the terrifying Khal-rah says, baring his fangs. His long, sharp fangs that look like they’re designed to tear carrion from the bones of his enemies.

Okay. Taking a deep, calming breath, I remind myself I’m in the right place at the right time. I was expected. This male knows my name. I didn’t imagine anyone in Taliz Valquan’s line of business would need to employ a Khal-rah for security, but that should make me comfortable, right? With a Khal-rah around, what harm could I possibly come to? As long as he’s on my side.

The driver has already scurried into the driver’s seat and started the motor. Snowflakes are coming down in gusts. I guess I have no choice other than to follow the Khal-rah and depend on the male I came here to interview to hover me to town the moment the snow quits falling. It will be barely an inconvenience.

The six-and-a-half-foot male, well, he’s over seven feet if you count his craggy horns, grabs my hover suitcase as I exit the

back seat with Syzz in his carry bag. Instead of heading to the front steps of the house, the male gives me the once-over.

This is the least sexual once-over I've had on the entire trip here from Earth, and boy, there have been a lot of them. He's sizing me up.

I might as well size him up, too. Seven feet tall, horns that swoop up from his forehead, those scary as hell fangs, and a body built for just what he is. I mean, what could he be but a security guard? His face, if you can ignore his gorgeous green skin that reminds me of new growth leaves in spring, is surprisingly human. Without the horns, fangs, hooves, and tail, he'd be handsome.

He holds his arm up, palm toward me in what on Earth is universal language for "stop." When a seven-foot Khal-rah tells you to stop, you stop, even when the temperature is dropping like a rock and it's starting to blizzard. Even when you have on the cutest pair of blue peep-toe heels and a baby blue pencil skirt that makes you take tiny mincing steps even when you're in a hurry.

He cocks his head when I just look at him in question.

"You going to make me hang out here until I can get another hover?" I ask with a gulp. It's freezing and after only a minute in the elements, I can't feel my toes.

For the first time since I left Earth two days ago in search of this stupid, fluffy story my editor insisted I write, I feel fear. Not when I was cornered in the underground shuttle on Aeon

II by a gang of teenaged Hiznats, not when that bug-eyed hover driver left me off in the middle of nowhere.

I figured I could at least wait inside the antique log cabin out in the middle of nowhere. I smelled a fire in a fireplace and figured I'd be safe and warm until the storm passed. But now, with this Khal-rah standing with his palm facing me, barring me from getting inside the house, I wonder if I'll live through the night.

My breath is rasping and I'm swallowing convulsively. As if our height difference isn't blatant enough, he's towering over me from the first step, still looking at me as if he's expecting something. Does he want me to pay him to spend the night here, or does he want something more nefarious? The blood drains from my face.

## **Taliz**

I resisted doing this interview. I have plenty of work. What need have I for more orders? I'm already booked three years into the future.

All my friends encouraged me to do it, though. "What harm would come from it?" they'd asked. "Maybe you could charge more and work less," they'd said.

I'll never work less. What would I do with my free time? It's not like I have a female or a family to spend time with.

When the Earther offered to stop at my house on her way into town from the transport hub, I relented. She assured me it would take no more than a standard hour. Now here I am

giving this little female a proper Universal greeting and she's snubbing me. Doesn't she realize I could leave her out in the elements just as easily as invite her in?

I drop my hand to my side, then raise it again, palm out, more formally this time. It's a visual clue for her to return the friendly greeting. Instead, she takes a measured step back in those ridiculous blue shoes. Whatever animal she has in that carryall is shivering so badly the bag is shaking.

Does she not know the most basic Universal gesture, or is she deliberately being rude? By the terror in her rounded eyes, I'll bet on the former.

I guess I shouldn't be surprised. Once, I watched a vid about the most backward parts of the galaxy and, as I recall, there were places on Earth who still measured distance by the length of an ancient ruler's foot! I laughed out loud at that. The entire galaxy has used universal measurements for a millennium.

Now, both Zaydie Mellior and her pet are shivering and her teeth are chattering. I decide to skip the formal pleasantries.

"Welcome. Come in."

"Uh, thanks? If you'll just tell Taliz Valquan I'm here. Maybe he can hover me into Frosttown before the storm gets too bad. Do you call it Frosttown or is that just a media thing? It's Arixia Fields during the rest of the year, Frosttown for the tourists, right? Can he take me there?"

I'm walking up the steps ahead of her when she lets out a shriek. Luckily my reflexes are fast enough I turn, catch her by

the waist and set her on her feet before she falls to the ground.

“Thanks.”

I’m taller than many species, so I’m used to towering over people, but this little Earther is smaller than most. It was as if she weighed nothing when I lifted her and placed her back on her feet.

When we’re standing on the stone floor of my entryway and as I’m closing the front door, she stops its forward motion.

“Did Mr. Valquan do this?” Despite her pinkened nose and cheeks and the clearly restless animal in her bag, her fingers trace the outline of the male’s face carved into the heavy *mella* wood door.

“Yes.”

“He’s even more talented than his website showed. On Earth, we have a similar design. We call it the Green Man. This one’s so detailed, so beautiful.”

She slides her hand with appreciation across the male’s carved features, closes the door, then stomps the snow off her feet.

“If you’d just tell him I’m here? I’m sure he’ll be happy to take me to town?”

By the tone of her voice, she doesn’t sound sure.

“I’m Taliz Valquan, Ms Mellior, and I’m sorry to inform you I won’t be hovering you anywhere until the solyris storm is over.”

“Solyris storm?”

I point out the large front window at the solyris brewing off to the east.

“Holy shit. It’s like a tornado from back home, only sideways and made of snow.”

“Now that one of the snow funnels has formed, you’ll see dozens, sometimes hundreds. They pop up and leave just as quickly. All hover traffic stops. Very dangerous. You’ll have to stay here until the storm is over.”

Her bland little face falls into unhappy lines. The corners of her pink lips turn down. Perhaps I’m mistaken, but she seems about to cry.

Whatever’s in her bag decides this is the perfect moment to yelp. Well, it’s a combination yelp and growl.

“Okay, Syzz. I’m sure you have to go.”

She squares her shoulders and walks to the door, but I can’t let her go out and slip on the ice again in those pitiful shoes.

“Does it have a leash? I’ll take it out.”

“Oh. Thanks.”

She squats, sets the bag on the floor, and pulls out a little blue animal. It’s the same shade as her shoes.

The little thing takes one look at me and snaps. The only thing keeping it from biting my ankle is that Ms Mellior keeps it firmly in her grip.

“It’s okay, Syzz. The big man doesn’t want to hurt you.” She eyes me warily, as if she’s wondering if her reassurance is

accurate.

Syzz snaps at me again, wiggling more aggressively, trying to escape his owner's hold and lunge at me.

"We'll need to come to a truce," I say evenly, squatting out of reach of the angry blue thing. "What is it?"

"Ever since aliens first visited and they shared some of their tech with us, we've only used it for three things. Weapons, of course." She shrugs as if this is self-evident. "Medical advancements, and designer pets. It's a multi-billion dollar a year industry. This is officially known as a darlinglove. It's part canine, the forked tongue is from the snake family, and the horn..." Her gaze flies to the top of my head and the rest of the sentence dies in her mouth.

"He really needs to go," she says. "That's his potty dance."

"Have you noticed he only does his potty dance when he's not trying to *bite* me?" I point out.

"I'll take him out."

I stand and say, "I'll take him. You don't have a coat. Let him to the end of his leash."

Backing up, I stay a bit too far for him to reach me. When he makes his next attempt to lunge and bite me, I squat, lean close enough to his face he'll feel the heat of my breath, and roar at him while treating him to a glimpse of my fangs exposed all the way to my gums.

He yelps and practically flies to cower at his owner's feet.

“We’ve just established dominance,” I say levelly. “I’ll take him to do his business now.”

## **Zaydie**

I watch my new host stride to the door, Syzz balking at the end of his leash. Forcing my mouth to close where it’s been hanging open, I grab my computer pad and look up Taliz’s website. Though my hands are still shaking from his establish-dominance display, I manage to scroll through the pages.

There he is, that same handsome face as the male currently walking my pet, but any sign of hooves, horns, tail, fangs, and claws have been photoshopped out. It seems like bait and switch, but he lives out here in the back of beyond and never sees his customers. I imagine if people knew he was a Khal-rah, it might affect his sales. I guess photoshopping himself to look less menacing was a smart business move.

Knowing he’ll be back any minute, I hurriedly look up his species. At the top of the page are a dozen pictures of males and female Khal-rahs. All of them in the same position I just witnessed: mouth open, eyes narrowed, fangs exposed. It is a quintessentially predatory pose. Threatening.

*The Khal-rah are one of the most feared species in the galaxy. Known for their warring local tribes, their hunting skills, and their taste for battle, killing, and weaponry, they are among the most aggressive, belligerent, and hostile of all species.*

*Few leave their planet, but those who do are prized as gladiators and mercenaries.*

Dear God, what have I gotten into? I'm stranded here on a planet where I know no one. There's a deadly solyris storm brewing outside. Syzz and I are at the mercy of a male from one of the most feared species in the galaxy.

My heart is jackhammering in my chest. I wonder if Taliz can hear it from where he is, like one of those predators in the movies. A picture flies through my mind of him using those claws to rip my heart right out of my chest and eat it while it's still beating.

His footsteps are mounting the porch. Each thunderous step is bringing me closer to my own doom. How am I going to make it out of this alive?



## ABOUT ALANA KHAN

Do you really want to know I have the cutest ragdoll cat in the world? Aren't you more interested in the sexy books I write for fun?

My sexy heroes inhabit my dreams and insist I put their love stories on the page. Most of my books happen in outer space, but the emotions and struggles could happen to anyone. Well, not the villains who look like snakes, or the spaceships, or the lion-men, or... well, okay, maybe none of this could happen to you. But you can go there with me when you read my books.

Join my [newsletter](#) for cover reveals, free chapters, deleted scenes, and weekly giveaways.

Website: [www.alanakhan.com](http://www.alanakhan.com)

Bookbub: <https://bit.ly/3bPhpVR>

Goodreads:

[//www.goodreads.com/author/show/19166791.Alana\\_Khan](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/19166791.Alana_Khan)

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/AlanaKhanAuthor>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/khanstribes>

Allmylinks: <https://allmylinks.com/alanakhan>

Amazon Author Page: [https://www.amazon.com/Alana-Khan/e/B07S1CFFXP/ref=dp\\_byline\\_cont\\_pop\\_ebooks\\_1](https://www.amazon.com/Alana-Khan/e/B07S1CFFXP/ref=dp_byline_cont_pop_ebooks_1)



ALSO BY ALANA KHAN

**Galaxy Gladiators Alien Abduction Romance Series**

Zar

Shadow

Tyree

Devolose

Drayke

Axxios & Braxxus

Sirius

Dax

Beast

Ar'Tok

Wrage

WarDog

Stryker

Vartan

Maximus

Steele

Tarrex

Zar-Rynn

Valeris

Zar - Third Anniversary Edition

**An Alien Rescue Romance**

Jax-Xon

**Galaxy Sanctuary Alien Abduction Romance Series**

Thran

Abraxx

Revikk

So'Lan

Dhoom

**Cosmic Kissed (Earthbound Alien Romance Series)**

Love On Impact

Love Uncaged

**Galaxy Pirates Alien Abduction Romance Series**

Sextus

Thantose

Ssly.

Slag

**Galaxy Games Hostile Planet Alien Romance Series**

Down To One

Down To Two

Down To Three

Down To Earth

**Galaxy Warriors Alien Abduction Romance Series**

Torrvek

Roklyn

Reever

**Arixxia Fields: A Steamy Small-Town Alien Romance**

Brek

Taliz will launch 11-11-22

**Mastered by the Zinn Alien Abduction Romance Series**

Vox 1

Vox 2

Vox 3

**Treasured by the Zinn Alien Abduction Romance Series**

Arz

Trev

Sinn

**Billionaire Doms of Blackstone (written as Deja Blue)**

Direct Me

Heal Me

Instruct Me

Teach Me

**Charity Anthology.**

Claimed Among The Stars

**Box Sets**

Galaxy Gladiators Alien Abduction Romance Series Books 1

to 3

Galaxy Gladiators Alien Abduction Romance Series Books 1

to 4

Galaxy Gladiators Alien Abduction Romance Series Books 1

to 10 plus bonus

First In Series - Zar / Sextus / Arzz

Galaxy Pirates Alien Abduction Romance Series Books 1 to 4

Treasured by the Zinn Alien Abduction Romance Series

Mastered by the Zinn Alien Abduction Romance Series

WANT A FREE BOOK?

Choose one or more books here.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many thanks to my early reading team: Gill V., Kathy F., Hilga H., Patricia M., Marianne K., and Anuschka-Marie W.

Thanks to Dr. Lee who always gives great feedback except. Also my assistant Stephanie A., who is invaluable in a thousand ways.

Hugs to all.