

For the love of Trina

By Shadar

Chapter One

I found Trina sitting in the alley two blocks behind the the club, one impossibly firm nipple holding her worn leather jacket open, that oversized silver cross she loved still hanging between her breasts. Laced-up army hiking boots and mesh stockings completed her eclectic outfit.

"Is he dead?" she asked glumly, staring down at the broken pavement to her left.



I nodded. "Probably. Yeah." Trina's angry punch had propelled the two-hundred-twenty pound man across the dance floor and through the wall behind him. The wall had been covered in blood.

"He was an asshole."

"He didn't deserve to die."

"I saw him assault that girl in the bathroom. He was trying to do the same with me, pressing that knife up under my tit, under my jacket, telling me to go to the bathroom with him or else."

"What were you worried about? Knives can't cut you."

"If I didn't take care of him, then he'd go after some other girl. Besides, he really pissed me off, what with that smirky smile of his."

"Remind me not to piss you off."

"I would never hurt you."

I flexed my still mending wrist, the result of our first handshake, and wondered about that. Our first attempt at sex hadn't been any easier. The bruises took a month to go away. Trina had since learned a few things about living among Terrans, although this incident at the club said she still had work to do on that.

I'd found Trina wandering naked in the desert three months ago while dirt biking south of Bartletts. I was racing after a burning ship that had flashed overhead and then crashed in a gigantic explosion a few miles out in the salt flats. She was the only survivor, yet she just looked a little dazed, but without a mark on her. Given that, plus the raven hair and her six foot height and perfect figure, not to mention those too blue eyes, I knew from the start that I was dealing with an Arion Prime.

That should have terrified me, given I'm a Terran, but I'm a bit scary myself. The locals consider me an outlaw, a badge I wear with honor. I think of myself as a privateer. A couple of buddies and I have made a good living stealing anything that wasn't locked down. We hadn't hurt anybody, and as long as I'm in charge, we never will, but my wanted poster is on the wall of the Sheriff's office. My uncle the Sheriff to be exact. Which is why I'd been living out there in the desert.

Not any more.

Since Trina had arrived, I'd moved into New LA and was living in a fancy penthouse with five figure rent. I'd paid for a new ID and one for her, and then shown her how to rob banks. Not the usual gun in your face bullshit -- nobody gets away with that for long. Instead, Trina used her fantastic strength to tear her way into vaults in the middle of the night, going for the safe deposit boxes when no one was around to get hurt. I never went with her on those gigs; usually by the time she gathered up enough loot to justify the raid, the cops had arrived and bullets were flying.

I'm seriously allergic to bullets, but Trina says they just tickle. But then, she considers my buddy's old .44Mag as a sex toy, a fetish he's more than willing to encourage, those well muffled shots coming from his room in the middle of the night. Me, I don't do guns. Some people think I've got a bit of my uncle in me, but I don't see it.

Each of us in the gang has our own way of bedding Trina. Me, I liked to decorate her in stolen gold and then get it on the old fashioned way, something Trina was brilliant at. She usually slept in my bed in any case, enough so that I considered her my girl. But we share and share alike in my gang, something Trina was happy enough to oblige. I am just human after all.

"So I guess that club's off limits now," I said despondently as I heard the sirens approaching. "I wish you hadn't killed that asshole though -- brings too much attention our way. My uncle can't just look the other way now."

She just shrugged, falling deeper into her funk.

The idiot who'd tried to assault her in the club hadn't a clue that she was a Prime -- after all, half the people in that club dressed like Arions.

"I want to go home," she announced.

I fired up my old ground bike and scooted forward a bit on the seat. In a blink of an eye she was sitting behind me, arms and legs wrapped around me, her hard nipples digging erotically into my back as she wrapped her jacket around both of us, her kisses teasing my ear. I kicked the bike into gear and roared off into the darkness, leaving the flashing lights far behind.

Life was good; long as Trina was around. She was always horny after a fight. Or a job.

Chapter Two

Sheriff Butch Holden tossed his hat on the hook as he walked through the door of his small county office. The autopsy from the club killing hadn't been pretty -- someone had punched the victim hard enough to crush most of his facial bones, driving the bridge of his nose back into his brain, shattering his skull. The forensics showed the weapon had been a woman's fist, but the few after-hours club-goers they'd managed to gather up claimed they hadn't seen a thing. Which was typical.

Unfortunately, for the victim, one of the revelers had been a Prime.

Butch wasn't too surprised by that. The recent spate of bank robberies had clearly been done by a Supremis woman. She'd left impressions of her slender fingers deep in the steel, fingerprints too. Not that fingerprints were worth much -- they weren't unique for Supremis.

The deputy on duty, Carey Phillips, looked up worriedly at him as he walked in. "She's in there, boss," Carey pointed toward his even smaller office, her left eyebrow lifting. "Been here for a half hour already."

Carey had called him urgently as soon as the blonde Protector had shown up, but it still took him a while to get there from the other side of the county.

Butch swallowed hard and hesitated as he placed his hand on the door-knob. Like everyone else on Farway Station, he knew a Protector had been assigned to their planet two years ago. The spectacular space battles and the occasional Arion bodies his deputies found, pelvises crushed, spines broken, had made that clear enough. But she hadn't made formal contact with any officials to date. He assumed that she was blending in with the locals like Protectors did on most world.

The crushed bodies she left in New LA had woken up the city cops, and they'd acted like amateurs and leaked the story to the media who exploited it to the max. It didn't hurt that most people thought Protectors fucked their victims to death, courtesy of the pornos that exploited that myth, but he knew how Protectors really did it: draining them of energy and then damaging their hearts. The sex thing came in as part of the draining thing. Supremis used a lot of energy during sex, and that required a direct pathway to their orgone reserves, which was in a male's sexual organs in any case. That kind of fight didn't always go the

Protector's way as primal males were immensely strong. Even worse, it made little sense to fight that way when both combatants were busty females. They were like energizer bunnies, never running out of gas.

The actual killing hold was set up with their legs, which was easy enough to given that Supremis men were easily seduced with a Velorian's super-pheromones. They turned into homicidal rapists, totally confident of their power over a woman, despite knowing how dangerous Protector's were. They'd heard enough stories about the Arion men who'd won such encounters, and they were determined to gain that legendary status themselves.

It took a dozen orgasms to determine the outcome, but the balance would tilt after just a few. Energy was exchanged along with vital fluids, and women were far better at absorbing orgone than men were. If the Protector survived the initial violence of the Arion sexual assault, then they usually were able to dislocate their opponent's spine and pinched their spinal cord to paralyze them. That took hundreds of tons of constricting force as Supremis bones and cartilage were so hard they made steel seem marshmallow soft.

Death finally came when the victor jammed their fingers up under their opponent's diaphragm after they'd been paralyzed and tore their aorta loose from the heart. It was one of the few injuries a Supremis couldn't heal from. They needed blood like every other living being.

Butch had further read that the Empire was training its people better than it had back when he attended the Police Academy. He would never forget the single lecture he'd attended where a Protector described what he knew about Supremis combat. He still remembered her as the most breathtakingly beautiful woman he'd seen, before or after. She'd told him how they did it: the draining, the scissors hold, ankles crossed, using all their strength to compress the spinal cord. Someone had asked a question, and the Protector had casually admitted that the draining process required a dozen or more orgasms. That had inflamed his fantasies at the time: he'd have settled for a single one with that gorgeous Protector. The fact that she used her sex as a weapon had both excited and disturbed him.

He took a deep breath and put those thoughts behind him, and then firmly opened the door to his office. He wasn't going to let this alien see

that he was afraid. Or infatuated. She was a cop, just like him. A beautiful one, maybe, but still a cop.

The Velorian stood in the middle of his office, basking in a sunbeam that came through one window. She was easily 6'3" in her bare feet and wore a long, white shirt which was unbuttoned to reveal a skintight blue top and tiny red skirt beneath -- a traditional Protectors uniform he realized. A small Supremis 'S' was centered over her left breast. Her hair was unbrushed and crudely tied into two pony tails that hung to her breasts. A tiny red choker comprised her only jewelry.

Unlike the first Protector he'd seen, she wasn't beautiful in the classic sense, but instead exuded a sense of raw power and sexiness. Her blue eyes were crystal clear and luminous as she turned to look at him.

"Crystl And'leyan at your service," she said, the usual greeting of a Protector.



"Have a seat." Butch gestured toward a guest chair as he settled into the old creaking swivel chair that he'd spent far too much time in.

She walked a few steps to the chair and settled gracefully into it, her body rippling with a fantastic array of tight muscles. Despite being as slender as a model, Butch had never seen anyone with such defined muscularity.

He remembered reading somewhere that Velor had started training their Protectors differently these last ten years -- subjecting them to intensive exercise prior to leaving the gold field of Velor. A Protector would never lose the muscle they'd acquired in a gold field.

That also meant this woman was quite young -- not that you could tell. Eighteen or eighty, they looked about the same.

"You've got Arions," she said simply, making it sound like he should go and spray for bugs.

"One for sure," Butch replied tersely.

"I'm going to need some help with her."

Butch blinked as he stared up at the tall blonde. "My help?"

The Protector squirmed uncomfortably in her chair, hard tendons standing out in bold relief on her hands and wrists as she flexed them. "Her name is Trina, and she's a newgen."

"Which is exactly...?"

"Latest generation of Arions. Very strong, very well trained. My odds of defeating her, one-on-one, are 60:40."

"In your favor?" Butch asked.

"Of course," she said with a little laugh.

"What's wrong with that?"

"How many encounters at those odds do you think I can survive?"

Butch thought for a moment. "Same odds that the House has at Blackjack down at the Prancing Pony," he said, feeling chastened. "But sometimes I get lucky and go home a winner."

"Exactly. Except we're talking about my life and the protection of your planet here."

"So, how can I help? I don't have Black Ops people or anything. No fancy rail guns. Just me and a few deputies with handguns. You should talk to City. They've got more firepower."

"They can't wipe out Arions any more than you can."

"So how can I help then?" Butch asked, gesturing with palms up.

"I need someone on the inside. Someone to get close to her. To report when she's vulnerable."

"How could she be vul..."

"Gold. A female Prime living with Terran men. Sex. It happens."

Butch wasn't sure he believed that. Why would a superwoman mess around with a normal? Didn't their men have a cock that would intimidate a porn star, not to mention harder than steel?

"Seems she runs with a bunch of outlaws from Bartlett. Small timers, at least until she showed up."

Butch didn't like the sound of that. There was only one gang out there. Mark's gang of misfits and malcontents.

"And one of them is your nephew, Mark," she said simply, confirming his worst fear. She knew.

"Bullshit!" he barked. "What kind of..."

He shut up when she tossed a picture on his desk. It showed Mark standing next to a raven haired woman with startling bright blue eyes. His stomach fell as he recognized Mark's new girlfriend. They'd made a very brief appearance at the family Christmas party two months ago. She come dressed completely inappropriately for a Christmas dinner, what with her black leather and chains, her jacket unbuttoned far enough to serve up a nipple or two with dinner. He remembered that she'd spoken with a thick accent that didn't quite sound Nordic.

And as far as Mark's gang went, he'd tried to protect his nephew. Blood was thicker than law, and Mark was just a common thief. He hadn't stolen anything that wasn't covered by insurance. He hadn't hurt anyone.

But now his girlfriend had. No way was he going to cover that up.

"She's really an Arion? A homicidal Prime?"

"Guaranteed."

Butch's stomach fell further. Mark had always had a thing for what he called 'dangerous' women, but this was ridiculous. He tossed the picture back at her. "Could be some photoenhance. Doesn't prove anything."

"You want to keep your nephew alive?"

Butch swallowed hard, realizing he wasn't going to bluff this Velorian. "Even if I accept its true, what do want me to do?"

"I want to meet with your nephew and ask him to help; give him a chance to save his life and those of the people the Prime hasn't killed yet."

Chapter Three

"You have got to be shitting me," I gasped as my uncle sat across from me in Muddy's Bar sipping our beers. "That fucking Protector is hunting Trina?"

"Her name is Crystl. You don't want to be caught crosswise between a couple of Supremis, Mark."

"No shit. So tell her to leave us alone."

"So you really are tangled up in this," Butch said sadly, shaking his head at Mark's admission. "If it was just money, Mark, then she might look the other way, just like I do. But your girlfriend killed a citizen last Saturday."

"The asshole deserved it. He had his hands all over several of the other girls. He damn near raped one of them in the bathroom before he tried that with Trina. He was tripping on meth and ecstasy."

"Sexual assault doesn't give her the right to kill anyone. Protectors don't take killing humans lightly. Neither do I."

"Keep that Protector the fuck away from me, Butch," I blurted out as I got up and headed for the door. "I'll keep Trina from hurting anyone else." I had to find her and fast. Maybe we could grab a berth on an out-bound ship and disappear on one of the mining colonies. Maybe even find one of her people's mother ships. She'd talked about the beauty of Aria. I'd like to see that.

"Mark, get your ass back here before I have to handcuff you to this fucking table," Butch bellowed from behind me.

I didn't slow down. I knew I didn't have much time. The Protector could be anywhere.

I banged the back door open and ran down the steps, taking them three at a time, only to nearly run into a tall blonde who was standing at the bottom, staring off into the distance. Startled by her height and the tight muscles that wrapped her body, it took but a glance to see that she was a Velorian; her tits were so firm beneath a thin wife-beater top that her nipples were pointing upward. She wore a pair of skintight jeans that showed off her long legs, and a dirty pair of white sneakers. Her hair looked like she hadn't brushed it in a long time.



She didn't even look up as she extended her arm, neatly stopping me as surely as if I'd run into a steel pipe. "That was stupid, Mark. Your uncle was just trying to keep you alive."

"You're the one who's going to get me killed," I blurted out, pushing hard against her arm. She didn't budge a millimeter. My anger started turning to fear now.

She slowly turned her head my way, looking down at me with eyes as blue as Trina's. "Arions don't leave loose ends, Mark. When her ship comes, you will die. If not at her hands, then one of her crew mates will do the job, and it won't be a pretty death."

"She said she'd take me with her."

Crystl laughed. "On a ship full of Arions? Do you know how long you'd live? Hours. Maybe days if you were really unlucky. They'd pull you apart just for the fun of it."

"Trina would never let..."

"Arions live in a male dominated society. Why do you think Trina does your bidding, robbing banks, whatever? She's used to men telling her what to do. She would be powerless to protect you on that ship."

I'd read many times that Protectors can't lie. But I didn't believe what she was telling me now. I didn't want to believe it. Trina was more than just a friend. Despite her occasional excesses, she was trying to live like a human. I loved her. And she loved me.

I pushed harder against Crystl's arm. "Trina has never hurt me, and I won't do anything to hurt her. Your kind kills her kind without even understanding them."

Crystl lowered her arm, her hands resting on my hips as she turned me to face her, her eyes only inches away. I inhaled her honey and wild-flower scent, so familiar, so much like Trina's scent, that my body quickened. I tried to pull away, but her hands held me tighter. A flash of anger filled me; Trina had never overpowered me this way.

She saw the angry look in my eyes. "You don't want to be caught between the two of us, Mark. She's killed. I cannot allow her to remain on your planet."

"Then take her away," I blurted out as I struggled against her steel grip, angered further by the effortless way she held me, her muscles barely working despite my strongest exertions. "Promise not to hurt her."

Crystl sighed and pulled me closer yet, lowering her voice as two men came out the door and headed down the stairs, her lips finding mine. She kissed me convincingly, her tongue finding mine to fill me with tingling desire, lifting one long leg to wrap it around me as she pressed herself

against my hardness, making it look like we were getting it on. The men smiled and whistled appreciatively as they passed by.

"She might not give me that choice, Mark," she whispered in my ear after they passed. "She's a very powerful Prime."

I was suddenly very aware of her hard nipples pressing against my chest, along with the gentle yet urgent press of her pelvis against mine, her strong leg holding me so tight.

"Help me take her down and I'll be very grateful," she said sexily. She slipped a small device into my hand, then released me as soon as the two men left.

"The next time she is gold encumbered, press this button. If you do that when she's weakened, I promise not to kill her. But you won't see her again."

"And if I don't help you?"

"Then she and I will eventually meet, both of us empowered, and when we do, one of us will die. Most likely Trina. Any humans caught in between will get hurt."

"She doesn't want to live with her people," I argued desperately. "She wants her freedom. The killing was an accident. It won't happen again." I was begging now.

Crystl slowly shook her head. "You don't know Arions like I do. She can't control her emotions, her anger. Not with her strength. Not with her upbringing. Primes have been raised to be killers. Nothing more."

I turned and stalked away, my heart pounding. I didn't want to hear this. I didn't want to do this. It was all just Velorian propaganda. The stuff they tell Protectors to make them aggressive.

But damn it, why'd Trina have to kill that guy!

I was halfway back to the penthouse, too lost in my fears and worries to remember the job that Trina was doing that night: the main reserve bank in that downtown skyscraper. Our biggest hit ever. How could I forget that?!

I spun my flitter around and headed the other way; I had to warn her about Crystl. It was normally a two hour flight to the city, so I pushed the speed control to MAX, the slipstream whistled around me, and went

vertical, hoping to make up time by pushing the Mach up where the air was thin and cold.

Chapter Four

Trina paused in front of the massive door in central New LA. The central bank building was made of stone and glass, with smoked glass doors made of inch thick bulletproof glass mounted in heavy steel frames. Reputedly, you couldn't drive a truck through it. Overhead, cameras swiveled back and forth, and guards were visible inside the building.

Even though her earlier heists were from sleepy suburban and rural banks with the whole town asleep, she wasn't going to let these irritations slow her down. Mark had said this heist would set them up for some time. Which was good... she was tired of smashing open vaults. How much brain power did that take?

She clenched her fist tightly, knowing her knuckles were far harder than any steel. No brain power needed here, just muscles. Still, given that she couldn't fly, she could only throw her body weight against the glass, and that wouldn't be enough by far. She needed leverage. She started working on getting that by jamming the outstretched fingers of her left hand into the steel frame between the glass frames, wiggling her fingers as she pressed as hard against it as the traction of her feet allowed. It didn't give. She kicked off her shoes and dug her toes into the cracks of the pavement, and tried again. The concrete cracked slightly as she put her famous muscles to work, slowly sinking her fingertips into the hard steel. She wiggled her fingertips and started the slow process of working her her fingers around behind the thick glass.

Her fingers were barely sunk to the first knuckle when a curious guard started to walk her way. She cupped her fingers and pressed harder yet, clawing for a handhold in the steel frame. Once she had it, she punched the glass with all her strength, her harder than steel fist hitting tempered glass. The window gave of a loud BOOM and shook wildly, but didn't break. She pulled her fist back and hit it with more than ten tons of force, and this time, the bulletproof glass shattered from forces it had never been intended to ensure, showering the guard inside in shards of glass. She stepped through the opening and quickly twisted his gun from his hand as he struggled to bring it to bear, then holding it in front of his

face as she squeezed it out like a normal human might wring out a wet sponge, gun steel squishing from her hands, some of it glowing red hot from the friction.

That's when she heard the whine of a defense laser powering up. She spotted it an instant before it fired, and turned to face it, opening her jacket to keep the beam from vaporizing her beloved old leather. The coherent light flashed across the space at light speed to strike the middle of her chest, heating her tanned skin to blinding incandescence, skin oils igniting to send sparks in all directions, the moisture on her skin turning to live steam.

The laser fired three times and then shut down, its power supply temporarily drained.

Trina hungrily absorbed the energy as she looked down to see the edges of her leather jacket smoldering from the heat of her skin. Cursing the damage, she walked toward two other guards, both of them looking very scared. They flipped off their safeties and began to fire on her. She held her jacket wide open, letting their bullets ricochet from bare skin, some rebounding with a kettledrum-like tone after hitting hard muscle or bone, those ricochets so energetic that they shattered windows and fixtures. Other bullets merely thumped against soft flesh, dimpling it deeply before falling spent at the guard's feet. The latter impacts made her nipples itch with kindling desire.

Ignoring that misplaced sexy buzz, she leaped forward to grab the smoking guns, breaking one guard's wrist she tore it away so violently, and crushed them together with a groan of tortured steel until they were an unrecognizable mass of mangled steel. Satisfied that their guns were out of action and the ricochets weren't going to hurt them or anyone else, she tossed the crushed guns across the marble floor of the huge lobby and out into the street to warn the other cops. The disarmed guards ran for their lives, not understanding why they still had them. They'd heard horror stories about Arion Primes, but they'd never heard of an Arion with a sense of mercy.

Trina focused on put her fingers and raw strength to work now on the main vault, driving her fingers into the crack around the door, wiggling them deeper, working the hard steel as if it was nothing more than a

sculptor's clay. The difference was the scream of tortured steel that filled the air as she proved that her muscles were harder than steel.

Chapter Five

I saw the police flitters first, three of them circling downtown, their brilliant search lights focused on a single spot. I landed my flitter and began to run through the alleyways I'd mapped out only last week, approaching the brightly lit scene. The dark alley exit across the street from the bank was as close as I could get. A dozen flitters with rotating blue lights were grounded in front of me. I could see that the circular vault door, a plug easily three feet thick and ten feet in diameter, was deformed, with one side bent outward from the tapered opening to the inner vault. I could easily make out the imprint of Trina's hands in the thick steel. It was the biggest vault I'd ever seen.

As I stared, two large bags flew through the crude opening, and then Trina herself appeared, wearing that old leather jacket and silver cross that she loved so much. Her jacket looked charred.

She was suddenly slammed backward as a police officer fired three rounds from a very large rifle, the boom of its report nearly deafening me as it echoed from the glass walled buildings. I remembered Butch telling me about a heavy armor-piercing rifle that the city cops had bought to bring down Betans.

Her body jerked twice more as three large lead smears appeared on the right side of her chest, the impact slamming her up against the mangled door of the vault. She quickly regained her balance, acting as if the bullets were a minor inconvenience, and reached down to pick up the bags I knew were filled with gold coins. I proudly saw how useless the bullets had been against the firm breasts I so loved to kiss.

She'd barely cleared the outside door of the bank when the whine of a powerful laser filled the air, and a sizzle of pure light impacted the silver cross in the middle of her chest. It flared and began to melt, sending glowing metal flowing down her skin, heating the soft skin I so loved to caress. The laser shifted a few inches to the left, heating her breast to glowing incandescence, violently attacking the gentle softness that had been my pillow each night, just as it would be tonight.

She kept walking my way as the laser fired three times and then fell silent and depleted. She looked through the glare and smiled as her keen eyes saw me crouching in the shadows. Unfortunately, the flitter searchlights followed her smiling gaze to find me. I quickly ducked

further back in the shadows, only to have a salvo of bullets chip away at the paving bricks I'd just been kneeling on. The cops were trigger happy. I retreated further yet while shouting back, "I'm OK Trina... don't..."

I was too late. She saw the shooter on the flitter lining up on my new position, and two blinding beams from her eyes illuminated the officer's body, sparks flying as his clothing caught fire. His body literally exploded from the intense heat, filling the flitter with burning gore. The other flitters began to fire both at me and Trina now, and her eyes flicked up to illuminate them as well. Within seconds, three showers of burning debris rained down on the street, crushing some of the police cars, lighting others on fire. Policemen panicked and ran, their clothing on fire.



I closed my eyes and said a little prayer. For her soul. Then for mine. There would be no explaining now. No compromise. No hope.

I was turning away to run for my life when I caught a brief glimpse of a red and blue and blonde streak coming from above, and Trina's body exploded in a blinding flurry of sparks as that living missile hit her, the expanding shock wave blasting the windows out of the surrounding buildings

before it hit me like a hammer blow. The next thing I saw was a dumpster coming toward me like a freight train. I never felt the impact.

Chapter Six

I woke up to find myself strapped to a hospital bed. The restraints said it was over. So did the bars on the window. That mean Trina was dead. She'd never allow me to rot in jail.

I blinked my eyes and tried to focus on the room, realizing that one eye was covered in a bandage. A fuzzy shape swam into view. I blinked again, and could suddenly focus. I saw a a woman sitting on the chair beside the bed.

Damn it. It was the fucking blonde.

"How are you feeling, Mark."

I cursed silently, blinking away a gathering tear at the same time. I could suddenly focus on the woman who'd killed the woman I loved. She wore a black top unbuttoned to show a lot of cleavage, her matching mini-skirt revealing even more of her long, tightly muscled legs. Flaunting her body.

She leaned closer to look into my eye, her eyes as bright and clear as Trina's, her expression filled with simple arrogance. She was impossibly strong. She looked impossibly beautiful.

I hated her for both.



"So, at least that eye works, I see. The docs were worried. They dug a lot of glass out of it."

"And... what about Trina?" I asked in a choking voice.

"She fought well, but I had the advantage of surprise. I'm sorry."

I closed my eye before the tears filled it. Damn it!

"You should know that she tried to save you."

I opened my eye to stare at her. "What?"

"She turned away from battle to lift that dumpster off you, letting you breathe."

"Then she...?"

"Turning her back on me was what gave me the advantage. I guess I owe you."

"Owe me? For helping you kill someone I love?"

"Some you thought you loved. Arions don't know what love means."

I closed my eye again, realizing it was the Velorian who didn't understand love. Trina had turned her back on one of the most dangerous beings in the universe. A woman designed to kill her kind. She did it to save me, knowing it reduced her chances of survival. If that wasn't selfless love, then what was?

"You... you used her compassion... to kill her," I choked out.

The anger and sense of loss boiled up in me, filling my eye with tears again as I tried to sit up, struggling against my restraints. "I hate you. Your kind. Your fucking war. Your hatred of anything Arion. Trina wasn't a bad person."

"She killed humans, Mark. A dozen at the bank alone. Don't confuse her tenderness toward you with her sense of humanity. She was born a killer and she died one."

"And I served her up to you. It was her compassion, her love for me, that killed her."

Crystl started to rise, standing incredibly tall and moving so lithely as she combed her fingers through her hair, powerful biceps shaping her arms as she did. "Don't confuse loyalty with compassion. You are the only human she cared for. The others she killed without remorse."

"She was working on that. Given time, she'd learn our ways."

"Not in this lifetime," she smirked.

"You bitch..."

"In a war, Mark, we both use all the weapons we have."

"Weapons...?" I repeated numbly. "That's all I was to you? A way to get to Trina?"

Crystl turned and walked toward the door. "Talk to your uncle. He's a good man. Then ask the court for mercy. And forgiveness. That's what's needed now." She paused at the doorway, looking back at me to smile. "And remember that I owe you. Anything you want. Anything at all. Call me sometime." And then she was gone.

I slumped back in the bed, my hands still clenched tightly. I suddenly knew what the rest of my life was going to be about: exposing the Velorians for the heartless killers they were. Telling the true story of Aria.

Trina's gentleness toward me had taught me that my story wouldn't be about right and wrong. But rather, about two kinds of wrong.

It would be a story about an endless war we humans would have to put an end to... in the end.

A story Trina was going to help me tell, even now that she was gone.

So would Crystl, as I eventually called in my favor.

Most importantly, it would be a human story.

The kind that mattered.

The End, for now...

