

## Princess Carry (Name tentative)

### Chapter 1

She held me in her arms as she strode boldly, purposefully down the street. My back and legs were being supported by her arms. Her exposed, bulging bicep muscles felt firm but strangely comforting. My left arm was up against her armored bosom. In some circles, this form was known as the princess carry. I had kind of always wanted to have a woman take me somewhere in a princess carry. The fact that I was being carried by an 8-foot muscular amazonsess made it all the better. I was silent, almost timid in her arms as she walked. My heart filled with admiration, arousal, and, yes, intimidation. At one point she looked down at me.

“You’re okay with this, right? I don’t want to do anything against your wishes.”

I nodded meekly. She smiled at me before looking forward again, with a determined expression.

Eventually, we reached a motel. One of those cheap ones with a pool, and no internal hallways. Holding me a little tighter, she kicked down the first door she came across. A middle-aged couple in a bed shouted with alarm.

“Many apologies!” she shouted.

She quickly slung me over her shoulder, freeing her hands. She reached into a pouch on her hip, and retrieved a large gold coin. She flipped it with her thumb into the room. Then, she tried to put back the door roughly to how it had been before. The hinges and lock had been completely ruined, of course, but at least people couldn’t see in anymore. After dusting off her hands, she returned me to being cradled in her arms. She looked down at me, to make sure I was okay. I was surprised to see not even a hint of embarrassment.

“The third one”, I said. “There are no cars in front of it”

She gave a nod of acknowledgment. Then, she resumed course. After walking to the third door, she turned, and once again slammed her foot into a door to gain entry. The lights were off, but enough sunlight came through the open door, around her massive frame, for us to see it was unoccupied. As she walked through the doorway, she took care to make sure my head and legs did not hit the walls. She, of course, ducked down quite a bit so as not to hit against the frame. There was a bit of room to walk around in, featuring a small desk, tv, and couch. She walked past all those; her objective was the king-sized bed. While a little rough, it was with precise aim that she tossed me onto the bed. She looked down at me, undoing the ties in her hair.

“You’re sure?” she asked, wanting to be certain that I wasn’t doing this out of pressure.

“Yeah. I’m sure.” I said, in a voice that was somewhat firm. Her figure towered over me, and it was still somewhat intimidating.

“Good. Now, take off your clothes, unless you want them to be torn off.”

I clumsily fumbled with my belt buckle, trying to be as fast as I could. With the pull of two strings, her gauntlets were loosed and fell onto the floor. As I took off my pants, she was undoing some latches on her body armor. Like the gauntlets, she just let it fall to the ground. I took a brief moment to be in awe of her naked upper body, before noticing my pants were stuck on my shoes. I got back to panicking to remove clothing. I didn’t notice how exactly she removed her

boots and skirt, but I heard them drop to the ground. As she dropped herself onto the bed, I thought "Ah damn. I liked this shirt..." As she ripped it open, only MOST of the buttons broke.

From there, we became a tumbling ball of flesh. I was impressed to find soft curves among her rippling muscles. She was experienced. She knew what she wanted, and how she wanted it. It's not like I wanted to resist her, but she did most of the work. Midway through, my body got moved into uncomfortable positions. I tried to move back, but any strength I had was futile when underneath her body. She was so engaged with what she was doing, the action of the matter, that she didn't even notice my arm attempting to break free from hers. The discomfort was minor enough that I didn't interrupt her. Or rather, the acts were so good that I didn't want her to stop. It went on, and on. Even though she was putting in most of the effort, I ran out of stamina before she did.

Some time later, we were lying in the bed, at rest. Her calves and ankles dangled over the bed. I suddenly noticed, with the door open all this time, the room had become somewhat cold. I moved around the disheveled bedding to find a sheet, and covered myself. She felt no such compunction. She was simply staring up at the ceiling, content.

"Hey!" A man shouted from the doorway. "You can't just barge in here! And holy toledo, you did a number on this door..."

The woman sat up, then stood up. Still naked. She approached the man.

"Do you work here?"

It was clear that he was thrown off guard. Confused by her sheer height and unabashed nudity, he stumbled over his words before forming a sentence.

"Y-yeah yeah! And if you don't pay for this room, and for a new door, I'm gonna call the... the security. ... or someone."

She bent over to reach her clothes on the floor. The employee took a step back in caution. There were weapons among her clothes, after all. But, no, she reached again for her pouch of money, and dug through it, looking directly in while speaking.

"I would awfully like to use this room until tomorrow.... That's how these places work, right? And then there's the door. Will... this provide adequate recompense?"

She pulled out a large, shiny gemstone, and held it out to his attention. At least, I'm pretty sure she did. At this point I was admiring her body from behind. The man was shocked again.

"Y-yeah yeah.... I'll check with the manager, but... this should be fine. I'm terribly sorry to bother you."

He took the gem and ran out. She walked over to the main room, and picked up the door. It was a metal door, and clearly bent by the impact caused by her massive foot. She contemplated the door some before bending it back to be... roughly straight. She put it in front of the broken door frame. Some light streamed through, but, amazingly, it seemed to stay in place. She returned to the bed, and gently lay down beside me. She turned towards me. With her finger, she drew little circles on my chest idly. She smiled. First warmly, and then a bit wickedly.

"Now then... Where were we?"

"Please... give me some more time to rest. That was a lot."

Disappointment painted her voice.

"Aw. Well, whenever you're ready..." she turned again, body facing upwards, staring at the ceiling.

About an hour, and some vigorous activity, later, there was some commotion at the door. Two men were in the front of the room. My lover sat up, and looked across the domicile to see who was there. One of the men put up his hand, attempting to remove her chest from his field of vision.

"S-sorry to bother you, ma'am. We're just the maintenance. Just gonna replace this door for you. But, management wanted to you to know, everything is fine, stay as long as you like. They even wanted me to give you a little something."

The worker motioned to his friend, who gave him a green bottle. The worker walked over, slowly, with the bottle held far in front of him. His other hand was shielding his face, so as not to look at her. She looked confused. She took the bottle, and he started to walk away.

"Wait" she declared. He flinched. "I need you to test this."

"Ma'am?" he asked with confusion.

"I don't know how things work in this land, but where I am from you cannot take drinks from strangers. At least, not before they prove to you it isn't poison."

She looked confused at the cork. It wasn't how she was used to seeing bottles topped, clearly. After a few moments of analysis, she held the cork firmly with the two fingers of one hand, and gripped the neck of the bottle with the other. Before she began, I pushed at her arms. Specifically, I intended for the mouth of the bottle to be away from her, once she had removed the cork. It took her a moment to understand what I was doing, and then she relaxed her arms, allowing them to be pushed. She proceeded to pull the cork from the bottle with her bare hands. The massive stream of foam shot out in the direction of the bathroom. She was first surprised, and then concerned.

"Well, that trap was successfully avoided. Thank you."

She smiled at me, then turned back to look sternly at the maintenance man. I could see that he was still trying not to look at her body. I grabbed my shirt, which had gotten mixed in with the sheets, and draped it around her front.

"This liquid is even more suspicious now. Come over here. I demand that you drink some."

The man was confused, and then looked at me. I didn't know what to say. She leaned forward, grabbed his arm, and lead him around the side of the bed. I returned my shirt to her torso. The man stood, confused.

"Open your mouth." she commanded.

He did so, and she poured some of the contents of the bottle directly into his mouth. He swallowed it, and the two waited.

"Fine. As you were."

"Yes, ma'am. Just going to fix the door here, and leave."

She nodded. The power drills started driving in the screws of the new hinge. The noise was unfamiliar, and confused her. I placed my hand on her arm to reassure her. Satisfied with this, she took a swig of the bottle. It was at this point that I noticed that the large bottle of campaign looked more like a soda bottle in her large hand.

"Strange drink. But I like it. Alcoholic. I suppose it is some form of wine?"

"Something like that."

"Ah, I would have preferred mead."

"Yeah, but the stuff you're holding is more expensive"

"So expensive they could not afford to bring us two?"

“No, I think that was meant for two. They probably have cups in the bathroom...”

“Ah...” she said, with disappointment. I can only imagine that she wanted the whole thing for herself. “I suppose I can share...”

Construction noises ceased. Without a word, the two left, closing the door, and locking it. My partner took another long swig of champagne. She didn't swallow, though. With her free hand, she moved me in closer and kissed me, emptying the contents of her mouth into mine. I swallowed. She looked at me with a devilish grin.

“Are you prepared for the third bout?”

I had to clear my throat a little after the sudden ingestion of liquid.

“I guess I'll have to find out.”

As we tossed and turned, I tried to grab the bottle. It wasn't that I wanted it, but that I wanted it to be safe. It did hit me in the head a few times, as well. Her grip on it was tight, however. I could only imagine she had experience with this, as well. Occasionally she would pour the drink into my open mouth. That was nice. She definitely had more of it than I did, though. The alcohol clearly had an effect on her, throughout the act of this, our third intercourse. At first I was amazed that someone so big and burly could get drunk so fast. But when I heard the empty bottle hit the floor, I realized that she drank it much, much faster than I anticipated. Just as before, I ran out of energy, and she was using my body as a doll until she was satisfied. I was depleted faster than the previous times. If she was slowed down, I simply could not tell. After she was finished, she was laying next to me, turned towards me. She was grinning like a giddy, drunk idiot.

“Heee.... You're so tiny. Tiny, scrawny little man... I never expected so many of you would be like this. I'll protect you, tiny little baby.”

“so many of you'?” I repeated.

“Men! Men everywhere. Tiny. They need women, women like me, to fight for them.”

“I can fight! I mean, I can solve things without violence.”

“Mmm, do you solve them by loving? You're not bad at it, you know.”

“Ah, you're just saying that.”

“Naaaah. C'mon, you've got techniq... technic... abilities. Good at kissing, too.”

She dozed off next to me. I considered getting up, but my whole body was sore. I just lay looking at the ceiling until I fell asleep.

I woke up a few times that night.

The first time, she was all over me. Fast asleep, my lover was on her side, facing towards me. Her left leg was fully outstretched and over my upper legs. Her arm made a big V shape over the top of my chest, with her hand next to my head. Had she been cupping my head? My back was over her right arm, which was outstretched. This strangely didn't bother me too much. The mattress must have been made of memory foam, or had a topper, because she was well-sunken into the mattress compared to me. Muscle is denser than fat, I remembered. This did create an awkward downward slope for any part on the bed where she wasn't. I briefly thought that the bed itself wanted me to be closer to her. I wanted to be. But her leg and arm on top of me weren't giving me any freedom. I tried to move a little, to see if I could just... just turn either left or right. Spooning or being face-to-face would be better than this. She didn't budge. With a little bit of work, I got my left hand out from under her leg, and tried to

push her arm up. She was just limp enough to let me raise her arm, and I started to rotate my torso away from her.

As soon as my back left her right arm, a trap was sprung. Well, that's how it felt. Like I triggered a bear trap. Her right arm sprung back at the elbow, pulling my body face to face with hers. Her left arm pulled me in as well, tightening her grip on me, while her left leg moved off the bed for long enough to allow my pelvis to rotate along with my body. But afterwards it pushed me firmly down, and bent at the knee to prevent me from reversing out. It was frightening. Mostly just because it happened so fast. She was forceful. I closed my eyes and simply braced myself as it was happening, but nothing else came. I opened my eyes, and looked up at her face. She was still asleep, though her face looked a little stern. She thought I was going, and she didn't want me to leave. I wasn't sure if it was a display of protection or possession. I forced myself to calm down. I was a little unhappy that I couldn't move, but also I was so close to her. It took me a while to get back to sleep...

The next time I woke up, we were spooning. I'm not sure how it happened but I'm pretty sure we were on opposite sides of the bed. I wasn't thinking about that now. What I was thinking about was her cold hand, rummaging around in the area of my pelvis. She hadn't done anything yet, but it felt like there was intent. There was mumbling coming from her mouth, behind me. It felt like she was in some sort of dream. I tried to move her arm away, but after every time, she brought her hand back there. I was concerned.

"Hey, quit it", I said, half-heartedly, hoping it would be enough.

She made loving mumbling noises. As if she was, in the dream, trying to reassure me.

"Stop.", I said firmly.

She stopped. Her arm went to being curled up at her side, her hand on my shoulder. She leaned in to kiss me on the ear. And then muttered more sweet mutterings.

The next time I woke up, it was because I had fallen out of the bed. I got up and looked around. It wasn't like I had been pushed out suddenly; rather that as time went on, less and less of the bed had become my side of the bed. Her body was almost completely splayed out, taking over much of the surface area of the bed. I looked down at the bed, thinking about where the ideal position would be... And then my stomach made an awful noise. I scrambled to the bathroom, and relieved myself.

Still in the bathroom, I decided to have a cup of water and look at myself in the mirror. I suppose it was because I was expecting a bruise, or a black eye, or something. Enough of my body felt sore that I couldn't really distinguish, by feeling, which parts were more damaged than the others. But in the mirror, I looked fine. No bruises. Bits of redness here and there due to prolonged physical contact, but everything looked normal. Well, my hair was a goddamn mess. I instinctively pushed it around with my fingers as a makeshift comb, to straighten it out a little. Who was I doing this for? It's not like she would care. I stared blankly into the mirror. Who WAS this woman? Why did I let her take me here? We had only just met each other, just locked eyes, before we fell madly in love. It didn't make any sense. SHE didn't make any sense. What had I gotten myself into. I couldn't really process anything, but I knew I was tired. I left the bathroom. When I returned to the bed, I saw her curled up in a ball, taking up a little more than half of the bed's width, her front towards towards me. Was this done subconsciously, or was it a reaction to the fact that she knew I had gotten up? In any event, it struck me as kind. I got back into the bed, and looked her in the face, verifying that she was still asleep. As a way of say-

ing thanks, I kissed her on the forehead. Her lips turned upwards in a giddy grin. It didn't take terribly long for me to fall back to sleep.

## Chapter 2

I woke up when dawn cracked. The curtains weren't perfect. Rays of sunlight hit the wall, which made their way into my vision. It felt like it was early. The next thing I saw was the hotel's cheap clock radio. 6:30. I thought, I should do something nice for my lover. Maybe sneak out and buy the supplies for breakfast. I turned around to check on her. She wasn't there. I sat up. It took me a few moments, but eventually I noticed her head and arms entering and exiting my field of vision. I moved closer to the foot of the bed, legs folded so I could get closer. She was doing sit-ups. Still in the buff.

"Why are you naked?"

She responded as though it were obvious, the pace of her exercise not missing a beat.

"I like having my clothes off during sex."

I shook my head. The question had been answered, so I had to clarify.

"No, I mean, why are you STILL naked."

"You don't do your morning exercises naked?"

"Well, I don't DO morning exercises"

"Ah.", she said. I imagined she was thinking "that explains a lot" It led to an awkward pause. I felt awkward, at least. She was still doing sit-ups.

"Aren't you supposed to be doing push-ups? Isn't that the cliché? Like, one-handed or something." Maybe some humor would change the pace of the conversation.

"I did those earlier. One hundred per hand."

"Ah." I said. This time, I let it fall back to silence. As her sit-ups continued, I continued my thoughts from earlier. There were maybe an infinite number of questions I could ask her. Somehow, one question kept coming to my mind.

"What's your name."

The sit-ups stopped. At first I thought that she had finished. But because her pose was still the same, it felt obvious that the question bothered her. The response came after a few moments pause.

"Really?"

"Yeah. I never caught it in all the commotion."

"... Lyssandra."

Whatever awkwardness we thought came with the previous silences was nothing compared to now. Eventually, her sit-ups continued. After a few, though, she stopped, and took up a cross-legged seated position.

"You don't know who I am, do you?" she said bluntly.

"Should I?"

She pinched the bridge of her nose in disbelief.

"Were you simply willing to let the first Alternian you laid eyes on take you to bed?"

I paused. I knew the question I wanted to ask. I knew how it would be received, so I hesitated.

"...Alternian?"

She blinked multiple times. I knew it. It was a stupid question. Rather, I should have figured out by the context that whatever an Alternian was, she was it. I tried to perhaps save face.

"Oh, oh yeah! No, no! I love Alternians! They're so big! And strong! And big!"

None of that was false, technically speaking. She looked completely unamused. Then, she shook her head and shrugged.

“No matter. I’m glad to finally have met one of you that doesn’t know who I am. Idiot or no.”

She breathed a sigh of relief. I had no idea what was going on.

“What is your name” she asked as she stood up.

“Timothy. But, Tim is fine.”

“Well then, Timothy. I am going to take you to breakfast. I’ll inform you of the past three years in world politics.”

“Sure. But only if I get to walk.”

She grinned, then shrugged.

“Makes no difference to me.”

We got dressed, and then she led me to a local restaurant. There was little small talk. It was now that I noticed that a lot of people were looking at her. Not as though they were confused, but as though she was a celebrity. I noticed some people trying to take pictures of the two of us together. I slowed down, to create more distance between us. It wasn’t like I needed to worry about keeping track of her; I only needed to look up. She stood head, shoulders, and bust above the crowd.

She continued until we reached a restaurant, and looked behind to check I was still there, before entering. I raised my arms and pretended to yawn, in order to draw her attention to me. This was enough, and she went in. About a minute later, I entered.

Lyssandra had been waiting on the other side of the front door. A waiter was waiting at the front desk, holding a menu.

“Your usual table, ma’am?” the waiter asked. She nodded, and we were lead into the back.

As we walked further into the restaurant, another waiter seemed to notice my friend.

“Hey! Princess! We were worried you weren’t coming today!”

She smiled back at them.

“I would not dream of such a thing!”

There was a table that a few bricks were placed under, in order to raise it up a little. A metal chair, unlike the others in the restaurant, was between this raised table and the wall. There was already a set of silverware ready for her. She waited, standing up, for the waiter to bring a normal sized chair and set of silverware to the opposite side of the table. The menu he was carrying was placed between the silverware. All three of us stood for an awkward moment, clearly both wanting the other one to sit down first. The waiter gave me a nudge, so I sat down first. She sat down afterwards.

“I would like to check again now that you are awake. You really know nothing of me or of Alterna?” The waiter left.

“No, I don’t know anything.”

“Okay. I am from Alterna. It is underneath what you call Antartica. Due to it being under the ocean, it is often likened with Atlantis. Do not call me an Atlantean or an Antartican. I am not either.”

I nodded. She wasn’t a person I wanted to cross.

“If any of this seems familiar, say something. It would expedite this discussion.”



“The past five years, I’ve only worked at a research lab and played older video games off-line.”

“I see.”

The waiter we saw on our way over came to the table.

“Princess! The usual?”

“Indeed. I will also require two additional glasses of orange juice.”

“And for your friend?”

He looked at me. I panicked, looked down at the menu, and read off the first thing that looked good.

“Steak Breakfast. Eggs, scrambled. With pancakes. And uhh... a cup of coffee, and orange juice”

“Ah” the waiter said, taking my menu and looking at my friend. “I can see why you like him”

“I am quite fond of the steak here”, she said to me as he left.

“Okay, I’m with you so far. Alterna. Under Antarctica. Like Atlantis. But not.”

“Good.”

“Are all Alternans like you? All... strong, tall, and beautiful?”

In modesty, she waved off the compliment.

“Oh, you flatter me. But I am not exactly a peak physical specimen. My abdominal muscles are barely visible”

I could see them, alright. It was hard to imagine a woman stronger than her, though I suppose her biceps weren’t particularly veiny or anything. She could win any beauty contest among non-Alternans, I thought. Well, I suppose I am a little bit biased...

“It is thought, though yet to be confirmed, that humans came to Alterna about seventeen millennia ago. We are, fundamentally, homo sapiens, but adapted to our environment.”

“What is that environment?”

“Compared to here, it is considerably colder, and the force of gravity feels stronger. Also, as we have discovered recently, a lot more neutron radiation is present. It is extremely difficult for surface-dwellers to survive there.”

“Neutron radiation?”

“I’ll return to that later. Here are some common answers to common questions. Our men tend to run shorter and weaker because of a matriarchal society, running back several millennia. It has recently been theorized that our high male infant mortality rate is related to the neutron radiation. We get nearly as much light as the surface gets, because of a clear layer of antarctic ice. Surface theorists argue that this makes no sense, but it is the case. Due to being so far south, we have three months of darkness. Our continent is as large as the top half of Africa.”

I could tell that she had to repeat this a lot. She stopped, as our food was delivered. The table was nearly filled with plates intended entirely for her, and then there was my large plate, small plate, mug, and glass.

“Thank you” she said to the two waiters.

I verbalized my thanks as well.

We didn’t talk as we ate. She was... fast. She rapidly ate steaks, sausage, ham, bacon, eggs, toast, french toast, pancakes. She tended to hold her silverware between her last two fingers when she picked up a cup. I can’t say why, but it struck me as cute. When she exhausted

all her glasses of milk and orange juice, she waited. Half of her food remained on the table, and I had only eaten around half of mine. I understood why she came here; this steak was really good.

We had reached a lull, and I felt comfortable asking a question.

“Why do you speak English.”

“Oh! You’re smart for a man who doesn’t read the news. Antarctic expeditions occasionally crash, and sink, and land in our waters. The scientists do not often survive, and when they are in our land they don’t survive for long. But, we were able to salvage books and electronics. Fifty six years ago, our scientists were able to rebuild the electronics, and we received radio and TV signals.”

“Does that mean you speak Chinese?”

“Nà shì zhèngquè de”, she said.

I assumed that meant “I do” or something to that effect.

“Does everyone in Alterna?”

“No. Because I am versed in surface languages, I was chosen to represent my kingdom. As a child, I found the foreign intriguing, so my caretaker encouraged me to study surface culture. Little did I know, but I was being groomed for this job.”

I could tell by her tone that she was unhappy about this, possibly betrayed.

The waiter brought back more drinks, taking away the old cups and some of the empty plates. As he did this she took a large cell phone out of a pouch on her hip. It looked like the sort of phone that could survive trench warfare. She looked at it, seeming to scroll quite a while before finding something relevant. She rolled her eyes and typed out a response. While the waiter was here, I was reminded of something.

“I thought he called you Princess”, I said, pointing to him as he left.

“Lyssandra Salfa Awasoruk, sixth princess of the kingdom of Awasoruk.” She returned her phone to its case, and picked up her knife and fork. “Oh, and before I forget, you’re going to have to be my boyfriend.”

I was stunned and blinking.

She began eating again. I gave it a few more confused blinks before I went back to eating. I was sure I could ask her about it afterwards.

### Chapter 3

As we finished our last glasses of orange juice, I got back to the thing that had bugged me.

“You want me to be your boyfriend?”

“You need to be my boyfriend.”

“Why? Is this some... amazoness ritual thing? Part of Alternian society?”

“Nay. If anything, Alternian culture has a much lesser emphasis on monogamy than American culture. Nay, it is an unfortunate consequence of human society.”

“I don’t follow.”

“My secretary tells me that people are aware that we spent the night together. She is insistent that I continue seeing you. People have inquired about the nature of our relationship”

“... secretary?”

“It is apparently important that I do not appear as a ‘slut’ or ‘rapist’, so she has spun to the press a tale of us having been involved via ‘text message’ before this encounter. And yes, as I am a diplomat, I have been assigned by your people a secretary”

“Just because you’re a princess?”

I was princess carried by an amazonian princess. I could get used to that...

“Once again, I am a diplomat. I have been in this city for the past thirteen days in order to negotiate a trade deal between our two peoples”

“Okay. I guess that’s also been in the news?”

“Indeed.”

“Alright. Since I don’t know, can you explain to me the details of this deal?”

“In short, my people wish to acquire various technologies from your people. We have materials in Alterna which do not appear on the surface, and your country desires access to them.”

That seemed simple enough. No, there was probably more to it, but I could ask about it later.

“So, I need to be your boyfriend so as to protect your public image, so the trade deal goes through?”

“Indeed. In honesty, I find it a blessing. This restaurant aside, I have found the surface world very boring. Moreover, few people are willing to see me as more than a princess or a diplomat. Meeting you was perhaps the second good thing for me to come out of this circumstance.”

I couldn’t help but blush at this.

“I can handle being second to this steak.”

I said it as a joke, but she did nothing to dissuade me from thinking that the steak was the best thing to have happened to her on the surface world.

The waiter came back.

“Ah, ma’am, should I also charge your friend’s meal to your office’s account?”

“Indeed. Many thanks.”

The waiter nodded. Lyssandra got up.

“We can now depart, I believe.”

“Wait, what about the tip?” I asked.

“Also covered by my expense account. Because of the reserved table and prompt service, the staff are granted an additional 35%.”

“Very generous...”

“I am ultimately here to improve foreign relations. A little extra for food is a small price to pay to promote the Alternian public image.”

“I thought you said it was for a trade deal?”

“That, too, is in service of foreign relations. I have more to tell you, but it will have to be in private.”

“I see.”

“Let us make haste. I must be at the Foreign Affairs office by 9:00.”

“Sure. I have no plans for the day.”

We left the restaurant. Once again we were walking, with me following her. I suppose it was less important now, but I still kept my distance. She saw the time on a bank’s billboard, and sped up. Once she got ahead of me by too much, I called out “Wait!”. She sighed, returned to me, lifted me up, and put me over her shoulder, before resuming a brisk pace.

“Uugghhh... I ate too much and I can’t handle this position.”

The weight of my body was pushing my bloated stomach against her rock-hard deltoid muscle.

“You would prefer the other way?” she asked, not slowing down for a moment.

“Sorry, but yes.”

And with that, once again she had me in a princess carry. I was being princess carried by a princess. I tried not to look pleased at the circumstance, but it was difficult. Thankfully, the princess was too busy navigating the foot traffic to notice.

We arrived at a government build that I wasn’t familiar with. She put me down, and motioned for me to walk in first. I complied. It was a typical government office building, which meant that there was a security checkpoint.

“He is with me.” she said to the security officers. They seemed to recognize her.

“Ma’am, he still needs to go through the checkpoint. But Ms. Browning has already given him clearance.”

“Oh, this is her conquest from last night, eh?” Joked the other security officer.

“According to Ms. Browning, that’s her boyfriend.”

As I emptied my pockets for the scanner, I didn’t enjoy the way they were talking about me. I would have to deal with it. I stepped through the metal detector without issue. As this was going on, the other guards opened up the velvet rope and let her pass through.

“Ma’am, has he given you anything that you’re now taking with you into the building?”

“No.”

The guards gave me my wallet, cellphone, and keys on the other side of the metal detector. Once I had returned these to my pockets, I nodded to Lyssandra and she lead the way.

We arrived at a conference room which had been refitted to an office. Another tall, muscular woman wearing furs and leather was already there, standing guard. I understood what Lyssandra had meant earlier; this other Alternean was more muscular, though as far as I was concerned, not half as beautiful.

“What the HELL were you thinking!?”

Oh, right, there was another, ordinary woman in the room. I had a feeling this was Ms. Browning. It was kinda funny to be seeing a businesswoman shouting at someone who could more than likely split her in half. The smaller woman was... about 5’2”, if I had to guess. She wore a suit jacket, glasses, and had her black hair tied up in a bun.

“I expect this bullcrap out of Droxannu here, but I expected a princess to have a little more common sense!” she continued.

“My private life is my own.” the princess asserted.

“No, you’re a diplomat who sticks out like a sore thumb, so it isn’t. Please try to think about your public image.”

I tried to interject on her behalf.

“It was my fau---”

“Shut up! You’re both at fault. And the way you’re going to take responsibility for it, Mr. Timothy Steffanfeld, is that you’re going to continue seeing my client for the next two months, bare minimum. You can fuck like rabbits for all I care, but, hey, try to do it behind a closed door this time.”

Shit. How did she know my name already? Also... that’s right, the door was wide open during that first time. I was going to point out that the second two times, the door was shut, but that probably wouldn’t help my case.

She sighed.

“At least you’ve managed to prove that Alternians aren’t only interested in women...”

I looked quizzically at Lyssandra.

“Droxannu was photographed sleeping with a surface woman” Lyssandra whispered to me.

“Two women!” Browning shouted, clearly hearing our sidebar.

I had follow-up questions, but now wasn’t the time.

“And princess! You, for your part, need to make it seem like this has been a relationship already. I’ve already issued a court order to lock access to Tim’s phone records. Yours are already a state secret. You’ve got to tell people that you’ve been texting each other for a week before your your little “encounter” last night. I need to go call your mother so that I can assure her that I’m keeping things under control. You have until 10 to set your stories straight!”

It was 9:10. That seemed reasonable. The woman left, and slammed the door shut on her way out.

“K’pak nu chedara! Gangangangan shida medafope Browning” complained the woman who was probably Droxannu.

“K’pak ne chedara? K’pak nu chedara! Browning shida medafope ne ghez. Kupat!” Lyssandra retorted.

“Ne xhaz...” said Droxannu, defeated.

It all sounded like Klingon to me.

“Apologies,” the princess said to me as she took a seat. “Droxannu is not comfortable in her English skills. Okay, tell me about yourself. You said you worked at a research lab? Studying what? Why aren’t you there now? Where was it. Why did you stop.”

“Ugh, is this how our relationship is supposed to start?”

“Do you think I am pleased with this? I suppose I was a fool for thinking I could have fun without consequences.” She slumped with misery.

“... Do you hate this job?”

“Yes. I have to memorize goddamn bullshit facts about the nuclear structure of Brozium, as well as its various applications. I need to act interested in several surface technologies which I am certain my people will not give a shit about. All of this fucking math. You cannot tell anyone, but this fucking trade deal isn't even why I'm here”

Droxannu spoke up again, this time in English.

“Princess. You cannot share the state secrets with puny male.”

Lyssandra groaned.

“If I am to be tied to him, I should make the most of it. Offense not meant, Tim.”

“None taken.”

Droxannu looked sternly at her princess, who in turn sighed.

“Apologies, Tim, but if I told you, one of us would have to kill you. The most I can say is that the trade deal is merely the first step of a plan. And this plan will involve Ms. Browning and I working together for quite some time. If you could stay with me, I would appreciate it. Last night was a welcome break. From the moment I met you, nothing else seemed to matter. All the troubles in my world melted away. There was only you.”

“... you stole that line from a radio drama, didn't you.”

“Regardless of the wording, that IS my sentiment.” she said, defensively. I was spot-on.

“Okay. I'll help you through this.”

“Thank you.”

## Chapter 4

For the next 40 minutes or so, I explained my life story. I got a bachelor's degree in computer science, then took a year off. After some short jobs which didn't use my degree at all, I got a position at an arctic astronomy lab. I didn't really understand the specifics of the physics until end, but they needed a full-time coder who could be isolated from society for five years. I had taken a ton of games I hadn't finished with me, and even had bought some JRPGs on my way there. As a result, I knew nothing about Alterna and the surface making first contact three years ago. I suppose this WAS all available on my phone, but I had so badly fallen out of the habit of checking my cellphone or browsing the net, that I hadn't thought to. Really, in the two months since I had gotten out, I was mostly seeing how my hometown had changed. I was only here in the capital because I was visiting my best friend from college. That didn't give us a lot to work with when it came to the basis for our relationship. We decided to start with me texting her at random, because I had dialed the number of a friend incorrectly. By the time we got that far, the princess was pulled away for her 10am meeting.

I tried to get a feel for Alternian culture from Droxannu, but there were some unclear answers. Because Alterna was a lot colder than the surface, the women adapted to the colder environment by building muscle mass. This meant, on the surface, they hated wearing long sleeves because it made them far too hot. Because of the male infant mortality, men were sheltered from the cold, and the society became matriarchal. Lyssandra's mother was, of course, the matriarch. Droxannu kept saying "Queen of Awasoruk" or "the kingdom of Awasoruk". I wanted to know how exactly that related to the term "Alterna", but she would suddenly clam up. She tried to pass it off as a translation difficulty, but it seemed suspicious. I asked about Broznum. She didn't know the specifics, but said it was similar to a surface metal. When I borrowed a Broznum dagger from her boot, it felt as heavy as a broadsword. That meant they had heavier weights for training, I imagined. Droxannu also explained that Lyssandra was the queen's sixth daughter, which meant the queen and five other people would need to die for Lyssandra to be queen. As that was unlikely, she was being used as a political tool on the surface instead. Droxannu herself was a warrior who was a little into English and Russian, and for that reason alone was made to be Lyssandra's aid. The two had never met before this outing. Officially, Droxannu was the princess's bodyguard, but it was more for the optics of the situation than practical. She was expecting to get an earful from the queen for letting the princess run off on her own with me, though.

Lyssandra came back by noon, along with Ms. Browning. About the same time, our lunch was delivered. The two Alternians split a circular party sub, while Ms. Browning and I each had a foot-long sandwich. My sub was roast beef, and I imagined it was because Lyssandra told them I liked steak. Nice. After eating half her sandwich and putting the rest in the office fridge, the human woman finally introduced herself to me.

"Amanda Browning, United Nations negotiator." She reached out a hand.

"Timothy Steffanfeld, unemployed programmer." I said, shaking her hand.

She had a surprisingly powerful grip. It wasn't superhuman or anything, but it fit with the image of her being a woman who got shit done and took no shit.

"I know," she said. After three firm pumps, she let go of my hand.

"The princess said that you were her secretary?"

She sighed and rolled her eyes.

"As I understand it, she's translating a word which is more respectful in her language into 'Secretary', as it's the closest equivalent. I'm letting those two get away with it. Please refrain from using it around me."

I nodded, solemnly. She continued.

"I have been assigned by the UN to be a neutral representative for Alternea, in efforts to aid the princess's interactions with surface culture. Before this I was a hostage negotiator. Honestly, this is relaxing in comparison. Even if I can barely get her to use her cell phone."

"Oh yeah, I noticed that. It's huge."

"Military grade. This is her fourth phone,"

"... Fourth?"

"Yeah. The first one, when we handed it to her, it crumpled in her hand like it was made of aluminum foil. The second one, she knew not to grip the phone too hard, but on the second day had pushed her entire thumb through the screen. Third one, she sat on. Hence, military grade phone. I already have a backup for it."

"Ooof. That sounds rough."

"Yeah. Could you teach her how to use the thing? It's a wonder she got any of my texts this morning. I still try to call her multiple times a day, even though the thing is muted."

"She figured out how to mute it?"

"She just politely asked some woman on the street to do it for her. I've been trying to get a hold of it to change it back ever since."

"I see... Well, I don't use my own phone very often, but I'll try."

"Good. Also, if the two of you decide to break into a cheap hotel again, could you at least text me? I'll give you my number."

"Yeah... sorry about that."

"Hey, water under the bridge. As long as you understand that you're now stuck here."

"Yeah..."

The two Alternians had finished their sandwich meant for a team of people, and came over.

"Timothy. We are going to the training room. Would you like to come?"

Lyssandra smiled. Droxannu had her arms folded and was looking away. I got the impression she didn't really want me to come, or maybe she didn't care either way.

"She says 'training' room, but what she really means is 'exercise'," said Ms. Browning. "Lady Alternians are nuts about physical strength, as I'm sure you gathered. We've worked some after-lunch training into their schedule, but we're making the most of it."

I stretched a little in preparation. "Yeah, I suppose I haven't been exercising enough lately."

"It will be good for you. You need more stamina." She gave a devilish smile.

Ms. Browning rolled her eyes, then put a hand on her face.

"Princess, I'd appreciate it if you could keep that kind of talk to a minimum when inside work."



The princess shrugged.

“Ku nemi takeel.” she said, to no-one in particular.

“Nu mut kessa fo’rin.” muttered Droxannu.

“No matter. We are going. Now.”

She headed towards the door. Droxannu left first, and Lyssandra waited by the door.

“If you are coming, then follow.” she said, rather sternly.

I made a mental note not to get between an Alternian and her afternoon exercise. I then followed afterwards.

We walked down the hallway. The two were muttering in each other in their native language. Businessmen and guards and gofers and the like also roamed the hallways, but generally gave us a wide berth. There was no sense of “keep to the right” or “keep to the left”; they walked in the center of the hallway. I suppose this is how you get to act when you’re a princess. We got to an elevator that already was half-full before we arrived. The three of us pushed ourselves in, and the doors closed. I wasn’t going to pretend that I didn’t enjoy this moment. My chest was pressed up against her firm posterior. The back of one of my hands was against her exposed upper leg. It was... somehow nice. There were certainly worse things to be pushed up against. Another male passenger looked at me with concern. All I could really do was smile awkwardly and shrug.

Thankfully, we only had to get off the elevator to let other people off twice. We exited on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor.

(After exercise, Tim checks his phone, tells his mom he’s okay. Texts friend to coordinate passing off his suitcase, laptop bag. Handles this during afternoon meetings. Also, condoms.)

(At some point, Tim unsilences her cellphone, and she is bombarded with noise, uses force to crush it, and throws it hard on the ground.)

(Also say here what happened at night: Nice restaurant, tour of her apartment, sex.)

## Chapter 5

The next two days went the same. I woke up to see her already exercising, then we went to Benno's for breakfast. We walked more closely together, because we didn't care who was watching. I felt comfortable enough to wave hello to a local news stand owner. He didn't seem to care, so I paid it no further thought. During breakfast, my portion was a little smaller, so as to avoid needing to be carried later. Indeed, I was not carried to work after that first day. At work, now that I had my laptop back, I at least had something to do. I didn't really have the clearance to assist in anything. I mostly tried to stay out of everybody's way, and listened whenever the princess would tell me how boring it all was. Also, I tried to read as much as I could about Alter-nian culture. However, there were no papers laying around that gave me any better idea than what she told me or what I could find on the internet. Well, more accurately, those papers and what she told me were congruent with SOME of the things I read on the internet. There was also wild conjecture, ranging from "their species doesn't even have males" to "they're actresses paid by the government to create fake controversy to distract from not doing anything about climate change" In any event, my understanding of her culture did not change much. Lunch was always subs, followed by exercise. I went back to doing whatever I was doing, which alternated between surfing the web and playing 16-bit games on my laptop. We always tried a new place for dinner, and she always got three meals before asking for another one to go. We watched TV, and had sex until I passed out. Rinse and repeat. It wasn't boring, or anything. Hell, she sat on my face one night. Near-death cunnilingus was checked off my bucket list. But, it wasn't until our fourth day together that things began to truly get interesting...

It was Friday. She had work, as always. At this point, our breakfast diner knew what my "usual" was. We checked in at the government building, and went our separate ways. I had figured out how to work the closed circuit television in our office the day before. I was able to watch a video feed of the meeting that Lyssandra was in. There was no audio, but I didn't care. I rested my chin on my fist, and my elbow on a desk, and just... watched. She was lovely, even while working out the specifics of a trade deal. I could have watched her for hours.

I heard something at the door, but didn't bother looking. Judging by the shoes, it was Ms. Browning, or some other surface woman. They went over to the coffee machine. I assume they saw me, because they said in my general direction "something something something read lips". I was pretty sure it was Ms. Browning now, but still, didn't care. My eyes were fixated on an angel with bulging muscles. The coffee machine ran. Something else was said in my direction. I heard footsteps walking over to where I was sitting. Ms. Browning firmly planted herself between me and the TV, so that I had no choice but to pay attention to her.

"I asked if you were feeling alright. She hasn't worn you out, has she?"

"No, no, I'm fine. Her and I are fine. Everything is fine."

"Good... Hm, what's with that dumb high school smile? Wait, are you... Tim, are you in love with her?"

"Why wouldn't I be? She's my girlfriend."

"Whoa. No, no no no. Uh-uh."

She turned off the TV, put her coffee down, and slammed her hands down onto the table.

"Listen, Tim, you need to wake up. I'll be honest, I still don't really like you, but I don't want to see that giant woman break your heart."

"Wh-what do you mean? I thought you said..."

"Yeah, I said you have to be her boyfriend. That's your purpose. Not to have a girlfriend, not to be in love."

"How is that different?"

"Ooooh, so many ways it's hard to count. Listen, you were hired for this job because she wanted a fuck buddy one night. It looks extremely bad for me if my client appears promiscuous. So you are pretending to be her boyfriend. And you need to do it for at least five more weeks. After that, I think I'm allowed to fire you. And I might."

"Once again, how is that different?"

"Because you're not actually a boyfriend. You're a whore that I'm dressing up like a boyfriend, for the sake of public relations"

"I'm not a whore!"

"Male prostitute? Male escort? Whatever you want to call it, buddy."

"Just because we've had some sex..."

"Just because you... Whenever you go on a date, who pays?"

"Her."

"And breakfast?"

"Her. But that's no---"

"And why do you think I'm paying you?"

"You said I was a member of your support staff and a gofer."

"Get real, buddy. I'm paying you so that you keep your mouth closed and your belt loose."

"Well fine! I technically haven't cashed a single paycheck yet, so you can forget about paying me. I've got money, I'll even pay for all the meals we ate together."

"Why, because you love her? Come on, stop kidding yourself. Your existence in her life is a business transaction."

"We talk about her work and pressures! We talk about our lives."

"If you think that's outside the purview of escorts, you've clearly been buying the cheap ones. That's merely a service you provide."

"I feel like you've been throwing your own opinions into this matter without throwing in any facts!"

"Here's some facts. She's sixth princess to the crown. Of a foreign country. So foreign, that nobody ever heard of it before three years ago. You're nobody. What business do you two have falling in love?"

"Well, we did. The moment we laid eyes on each other."

"You fell in LUST. You're probably a muscle fetishist. Would've fucked the first Alternian you laid eyes on, it just happened to be her."

I wasn't confident I could deny that.

"Yeah, but then we fell in love!"

"No, then I told you to be by her side because you were providing my stressed out client with what she needed to relax. An open ear and a hard dick."

"Why wouldn't she love me, huh? All I'm hearing from you is opinions."

"Does she do anything nice for you?"

“Sh---”

“And post-coitus stuff doesn’t count. And neither do meals.”

I wasn’t sure I had an answer.

“She’s... she’s just very busy, I’m sure.”

“Nothing, eh? Every time she gets out of a meeting, you’re the one to kiss her. Never the other way around. When she’s feeling down, you’re there for her, but is she ever there when you’re feeling down?”

“No, but...”

“What things has she done to make you feel that she loves you back?”

Somehow, I felt her words as a bolt of lightning, hitting me in the heart.

“W-well, I...”

“Timothy. Her society doesn’t have marriage. It doesn’t have monogamy. I’m not going to say that men are cattle in her society, but from what I’ve heard they’re definitely second-class citizens. The two of you are in no way equals. Physically or socially. I suppose you could run circles around her when it came to programming, but that’s all you’ve got. All you do for her is provide a service. One that I’m willing to pay you to do, so that she can do her job well.”

“I... I don’t believe you. I’ll ask her about all this.”

She shrugged.

“If you want. Just do it after five, alright? If you disturb her ability to hold afternoon sessions, I’m gonna have Droxannu kick your ass.”

“Fine, I’ll wait. But then you’ll see.”

She picked up her coffee, and sipped it.

“Well, I’m gonna start writing the press release for your impending breakup. You’re killing a golden goose here, pal, just because you wanted more than what you got.”

She walked out of the room.

I thought for a long time about what she said. When lunch rolled around, I sat alone with my sandwich. It felt like she didn’t notice me, but I couldn’t really tell. She was just engaged in discussion with Droxannu. It was all in Alternian, so I couldn’t understand it. On her way out, after lunch, she roughed up my hair. That was a sign of affection, right? I wasn’t sure of anything anymore.

In the afternoon, I tried to do some programming to clear my mind. I hadn’t really done any since I had gotten back from the arctic circle. But, my head was too full of thoughts about Lyssandra. Before I knew it, I had variable names like Lyssandra, Timothy, Love, quadriceps, Alternana... If ( Timothy+Lyssandra == Love) ... This clearly wasn’t doing anything to distract me, so I stopped, and opened a web browser. With enough digging I found an old in-browser game I used to play. The type where every “run”, you would earn a currency which you would spend to unlock powers, leading to better runs. There were ads, but I didn’t care. It was a distraction. I reached the end. It was still not quite 4:00. My next course of action was internet videos. I’d been trying to catch up while at home and hadn’t quite yet. There were still numerous channels and series to get caught up on. About three illegally uploaded videos of British comedians playing quizzes later, and Lyssandra entered. She was followed by Droxannu and Ms. Browning.

Lyssandra approached me. I smiled like nothing was wrong. The memories of the videos I was watching filled my brain, and I grinned.

(The girls suggest going to a particular bar, which disappointing Tim as he was hoping to go out to dinner with Lys again, they did on previous nights. They assert that it's tradition, but Tim correctly calculates that this would have only happened two times so far, at most.)

"Is it alright for us to go to such a public place? A restaurant is one thing, but when there's beer involved..."

"Don't worry. The bar's all spooks." said Ms. Browning.

"Huh?" I wasn't familiar with this lingo.

"Government types. We're in the capital, so some bars cater almost exclusively to senators, staff, security... those kinds of people. We're in no danger. Well, I should say, *you're* in no danger."

I rolled my eyes. "Lemme guess, 'cause they can kick everyone's ass"

"Basically. The first time they went to this bar, two weeks ago, they were the last ones standing at the end of the night. They egged people on to keep drinking, and everyone was either passed out from drunkenness, or had been knocked out because they wanted to start a fight."

"Everyone? But, you were there..."

"... yeah, everyone. That night cemented the notion that Droxannu and Lyssandra were the only protection Lyssandra needed. ... Which was good, because our department owed some money in hospital bills after that."

(They go to the bar. Check your weapons at the door)

I sat at our table, holding a beer. I was slightly drunk and very much alone. Droxannu was at another table, holding a drinking competition against a few men. Lyssandra was showing the guys and girls her expertise at throwing darts. The last time I looked, they had blindfolded her. She had tried to get me to join her, earlier, but I told her I just wanted to drink. I downed the glass I was holding, and looked around the table for another.

"Over here" a voice said from off the table.

The voice came from Browning, who was approaching. She had a beer in each hand, and was already sipping the one in her left. She set the one in her right down in front of me, and then sat down across from me.

"Youuuu..." I said with a bit of a slur. Huh, I didn't think I was that drunk.

"Me" she said calmly, in response.

"This was your doing. 'just do it after five' she said... Pah!"

She shook her head, with eyes closed.

"No, I didn't know about this when I said that. Or rather, I was fully expecting she was going to spend the evening with you again. No, this was her idea."

Ms. Browning motioned to the darts area, behind me and to the right. I didn't need to look to know what she meant.

"You told her?" I said, again, slurred.

“She’s not an idiot, Tim. You’re also not the first man she’s ever met. She could tell you were feeling down at lunch. You did very little to hide your mood.”

“What’d she say?”

“She asked me if there was something on your mind, and I said yes. She then immediately asked if we could go to O’Hannigans again.”

“That’s all?”

“That’s all.”

We drank our beers, together alone.

I suppose I should say, she was quiet so I could think. Maybe she had nothing more to say. I certainly had a lot of questions, but there weren’t any she would know the answer to. Why did we come here? What does the princess think? What does she know? What does she think she knows? Is this the end? Is she gonna kick my ass? Well, no, maybe that was going overboard. But I’ve already felt her pin me to a bed, effortlessly. I’ve already seen her crush a military grade cell phone with her bare hand. This, of course, got me thinking about her great strength. And with great strength there also comes great muscles. I thought about how those massive muscles seemed to perfectly fit onto her massive figure. I thought about that massive figure, and how it still possessed heavenly curves...

“Tim, why are you grinning? Don’t you remember what we talked about?”

Ms. Browning’s words snapped me back into reality.

“Sorry, Amanda...”

She threw an ashtray at my head. It missed by a wide margin.

“Until she dumps you, I’m still your boss! It’s ‘Sorry, Ms. Browning’!”

“Sorry, Ms. Browning.”

“That’s better.” she said, with a nod.

Quiet returned to our table. Well, as quiet as you can get in a rowdy spook bar. I tried to think about Lyssandra, again, but this time, not about her body. The first thing that came to mind was the kind smile she looked down at me with, the first time she carried me. I thought about how cute it was that she drank an entire bottle of champagne by herself, like a teenager downing a bottle of soda. I thought about how safe I felt with her that night. And after that, there was her laugh, her smile, the way she looked when she was serious, the way the light reflected off of her sweat when she was exercising... I shook my head, trying not to just think about the physical. I just felt... safe around her. I suppose anybody would feel safe with an 8-foot body of muscle beside them. But it was more than that, it felt right. Then, I thought about how... how a lot of the things she said to me kinda resembled orders. Maybe it was the language barrier. But maybe it was a social difference... But then, I remembered a line. At least the inkling of a line... She had said “From the moment I met you...”

“I have returned... Victorious!”

Droxannu derailed my train of thought with her triumphant cry, at the front of our table. It seemed she had out-drunk a number of the bar’s other patrons, and was now finished. And not a moment too soon, because she looked... a lot more inebriated than I had ever seen Lyssandra. Her arms were stretched up in a victorious pose, but she was teetering. As she began to fall forward, Ms. Browning was able to pull her mug out of the way. I did not. My mug, and indeed our table, was crushed as this giant fell through it.

“Princess! I think Droxy here has had enough! I’m going to go pay our tab. And see how much I owe for broken property!”

Ms. Browning stood up, and brushed some of the table debris off of her desk.

“Aw, but they were finally giving me a challenge!”

Lyssandra was pretty far from the dart board, blindfolded, facing away from it, with a dart in her left hand. She threw it over her back, at the dartboard. It landed on the board, but not in the ‘legal’ scoring area.

“AHA! Miss! You’ve got to drink!” said a few inebriated bodyguards.

“Just one drink more, Amanda.”

“Fine, just the one” she said, by now at the bar.

After having another drink, at the behest of her darts buddies, she walked over to our table. Or, more accurately, she walked over to where our table was. She looked down at her colleague.

“Impressive. Getting Droxy drunk is no small feat.”

“I bet.” I said, just to make conversation.

The princess tried to push the body with her foot. There was no movement. She sighed. After a kneel and a quick motion, Droxy was almost instantly over Lyssandra’s shoulder. I looked up at this huge woman, effortlessly holding this equally huge woman on her shoulder, and I could only feel admiration and attraction.

“Do you need assistance?” she said to me.

“Ah, uh, just a hand...” I said, embarrassed.

She reached down a hand to me, but it didn’t quite go low enough. She leaned forward a little bit, and I let her large hand take mine. With her as a point of stability, I pulled myself to my feet. At first I was about to fall forward, but her hand stopped my chest, and I was able to stabilize myself.

“I believe I have room for one more”

“No, no... I’ll be fine.”

She shrugged with her empty elbow.

Ms. Browning was already at the entrance, so we went directly there, assuming she had already paid our tab. She was already storing her service sidearm. A giant box was heaved out from behind the counter, containing the Brozium daggers.

“Ah, Tim, assist me.”

I hesitated. Was this my life? That was an order. Did I want to merely obey orders? I wasn’t sure why, but I continued waiting. Maybe I was waiting for a “please”? Ms. Browning pushed me from behind, as if to remind me that I was, after all, in the princess’s employ. I picked up one of the heavy dagger, and knelt down to put it in her left boot.

“No, that one belongs in my right boot”

Thankfully, I was low enough to the ground that nobody could see me roll my eyes. I suppose my rudeness was undeserved, but hopefully she might overlook it as an effect of my drunkenness. As requested, that dagger was placed in her right boot. I got another dagger, to put in her left boot.

“No, that one is hers. Right thigh.”

Ms. Browning now spoke up on my behalf. I could barely believe it.

“Princess, it’s late and we’re all a little out of it. Does it really matter?”

“Fine. I can sort them later.”

I had noticed, at least, that the dagger she said was Drox’s was a lot less ornate. With that, they were easy to identify. I placed the three nicer daggers into her other boot sheath, and two hip sheaths. I was able to put two of the remaining daggers into Droxannu’s boot sheaths. That left two daggers, and the large spear. Due to their extreme weight, it was a little difficult to reasonably hold all of them at once.

“I will hold the spear.”

She was looking down on me. Well. I mean, she was over two feet taller than I was; she was always looking down on me. But I felt something, even though it was stupid of me. I felt like I wasn’t being taken seriously. It was this feeling of dumb male pride, I suppose. It was the same sort of feeling one gets when taking in groceries from the car as a kid, determined to take as many bags as you could fit into your arms. I think I had heard beforehand that this was an adolescent form of “peacocking”; putting on a show for girls. But right now, it felt like it was about pride. After finding myself having a difficult time fitting two daggers into one hand, I handed her one, and only one, dagger. The other dagger was in my left hand, and the ridiculous pole-arm was in my right.

She looked at me again, now narrowing her eyes. I gave a bit of a wobble, leaning into the feelings of drunkenness as a crutch. She looked to Ms. Browning, then shrugged, and set off. Ms. Browning and I followed.



## Chapter 6

As we walked the city streets, it was hard not to notice that Ms. Browning was with us. I didn't quite know how to get from where we were to Lyssandra's apartment building. It was because of this that our princess was leading the way; she was the most sober one after all. But it struck me as odd that Ms. Browning was still walking alongside us. I wanted to comment on this, but I was having difficulty forming complete sentences. After two or three mismatched nouns, I stopped trying. Thankfully, someone filled the awkward silence.

"So, darts eh?"

"Hm? Oh yes, the accuracy contest."

"Yeah. We've never talked about it, but it seems you're pretty good."

"At that range, I'm sure any Alternian teenager could have made their marks."

"Any Alternian female teenager."

"Yes. I would have rather done it from further away, but I was told there was a fixed range beyond which I could not bring the darts."

"Ah. Hence the blindfold, the use of the non-dominant hand, the being turned backwards..."

"Correct."

I decided to join the conversation.

"I thought you were ambiduster... ambidocto... both hands good."

The giant chuckled.

"I endeavor towards it. But I was not born with ambidexterity. Rather, it is a strange tradition of my family. For longer than has been recorded, the royal family has taught its daughters to be proficient with both hands. I understand it not." She shrugged with her empty shoulder.

"She's really good, though. She can write in Alternian with her left while writing English with her right. Makes paperwork go faster."

"Ah, but that's only because my English is not good enough to write it with the left."

I smirked. It was a poor attempt at humility.

There was a lull in the conversation. I wanted to get it back to light subjects, but I had a hard time thinking. Suddenly, Ms. Browning said something to Lyssandra in Chinese. The princess responded, again in Chinese. I wasn't sure at all what was being said, so I assumed it was related to their work. I was trying to remember something, wasn't I? "From the moment I met you..." It was some line from the radio, wasn't it? Was I remembering the line from somewhere else? No, I remember it in her voice. I remember her pink lips moving, speaking the line. Next, I thought about her lips. Then, I thought about kissing her. I thought about my hands on her powerful shoulders.

I shook my head. This was the wrong train of thought. All I was proving was that I loved her. I still wasn't sure if she loved me. We are, on the books, in a relationship, sure. That is at least in part a cover story. Am I a fool for wanting more? For thinking that an oversized princess might love me, just because I love her? I suppose I am. But wouldn't I be a bigger fool if I never asked? The phrase comes to mind, "you lose 100% of the shots you don't take"... Okay, I am resolved. I gripped tightly the two heavy weapons in my hands. It was at this point I noticed that my shoulder started to hurt from the weight of Droxannu's spear. I knew I couldn't ask anyone to hold it for me at this point.

We arrived at Lyssandra's building. All four of us.

"Why are you here." I narrowed my eyes at Ms. Browning.

"Because I live here too."

"Huh?"

We went into the building. The security guard noticed us, and then kept reading a magazine.

"More accurately, the United Nations owns the apartments that the three of us are using. And possibly others. I mean, I have a real home, but this is where I've lived for the last two-odd weeks."

We entered the elevator. It seemed as though fitting into the elevator with Droxannu over her shoulder was something that Lyssandra had to do before, as it didn't take long. I was just glad to be able to let the spear rest against the wall.

"It is indeed most gracious of your organization to provide for us."

"Ah, don't get too glad, honey, I'm sure your mom will be paying for it in Brozium eventually."

"True enough..."

The elevator stopped once, on floor four.

"This is my stop. You kids try not to have too much fun."

I groaned out a "yes ma'am"

"I look forward to seeing you again, come Monday!" she said over me.

She waved, and then manipulated Droxannu's limp arm to also appear to be waving. I thought it was cute, though I wasn't sure if Browning agreed.

The doors closed, and there was silence. We both knew that there was something that we, or at least I, was nervous about bringing up. It didn't take long for the elevator to reach six, but it felt like an eternity. We all got out. I had switched to holding the spear in my left hand and dagger in my right, and foolishly hoped she wouldn't notice. I noticed she never shifted Droxannu around.

"Ah, is this her floor too?"

"Yes, but I will be allowing her use of my bed tonight. I had tried to manipulate her door before, but it ended in a crushed door, which she spent the next day complaining about."

"Oh. Do you want me to get out-- your door, then?"

"No, I am perfectly sober. I can get it myself."

I nodded, and we arrived at her door. As promised, she opened it without issue. After we got in, I shut the door, and she tossed her friend onto her bed. We dropped her remaining weapons at the foot of the bed. In a swift motion, she unsheathed the blade on the left side of her waist, and tossed it lightly into the air. She then lifted her leg up, unsheathed the left boot dagger and the right waist dagger, tossed the right dagger with a slow overhand and left dagger with a faster, direct throw, causing them to switch hands. The left hand sheathed the dagger into her left waist sheath, then caught the dagger thrown earlier at as she returned the dagger now in her right hand to its place on her hip. Finally, she put the dagger now in her left hand back into her boot. She looked relieved; as if that had been bothering her the entire walk. When I let out an impressed whistle, she suddenly tensed up, as if she forgot I was there. Somehow I felt it was kinda cute. So much of what I liked about her was difficult to put into

words. Maybe that's why I felt like she might be the one? I remembered my resolution, and took a deep breath.

"There's something I want to talk to you about."

She didn't respond. She wouldn't look me in the eyes, either.

"I--"

"Stop. I... I don't want to talk about it tonight."

"Bu--"

"I know. I know what you're going to say and I... I do not want to tonight. Please."

She looked me in the eyes now, with determination. It wasn't like I had been keeping score, but I think that was the first time I heard her say 'please'. I couldn't help but oblige. I didn't want to upset her, regardless of the fact that I was sure that she could reduce my body to an unidentifiable lump.

I nodded in acknowledgment.

"I am going to make use of the shower. You are not invited. Otherwise... make yourself at home, I suppose."

"Thank you."

"You are welcome."

And with that, she walked away.

I moved to the couch, where we had watched TV together. The right half of the couch had a distinct... Alternian butt shape, so I sat on the left. But, I wasn't in the mood for TV. I checked my phone for messages and found nothing. I didn't want to go over all the things I might say; it didn't feel useful. But, at being unable to express myself, I just felt... vexed. I got up, and paced. The shower was still going. I looked at the stacks of books she had read. "The Feynman Lectures on Physics" caught my eye. That book was supposed to be particularly good, as a study tool. I picked it up and returned to the couch, and began reading.

I had lost track of the time, but I felt like I got far too many chapters into the book before she came out of the shower. She had a drink from the fridge, and then came over to the couch. It was still amazing that they made her a bathrobe in her size. These were the perks of being royalty, I supposed. She sat beside me and noticed what I was reading.

"Ah. A good book." she said, trying to make small talk.

"Indeed."

She reached over to her stack of unfinished books, taking a thick volume called "History of the Ancient World" and opening it to a spot in the middle. The two of us read in silence.

Some time later, my mouth opened wide for a yawn. I was getting tired. I suppose, the sooner I slept, the sooner tomorrow would come.

"I'm going to sleep now." I said, while standing up.

She looked at me and nodded, then went back to reading.

I went to the bedroom, and looked at Droxannu, on the bed. I wasn't in the mood to interact with her, so I slept on the nearby couch. I don't think I had really noticed in previous nights, but this apartment was quite cold at night. Perhaps this was to emulate their native environment? Thankfully, the couch had some blankets draped over its back, so I took one of those and cloaked myself in it. It was still cold. Somehow, I gradually fell asleep.

I woke up in the middle of the night. Lyssandra had scooped me out of the couch, and was gently, quietly, trying to move me. The lights were off, but I could still feel that she was naked. I

supposed this was some time after she had went to sleep, but I wasn't certain. I tried to pretend to still be asleep; I didn't mind this but I also, immaturely, didn't want her to know this. When she placed me onto her bed, I made something of a grumble noise, involuntarily. The jig was up; she knew that I was awake.

"Sorry" she whispered "I just... I wasn't sleeping well. Are you okay with this."

"Yes" I whispered back.

"Good."

She then got into bed next to me, such that I was sandwiched between her and Droxannu.

"Since we're here, do you want to..."

"Not really, no..."

She took my hand and held it against her breast.

"Are you sure?"

I had to bite my lip. This position? Between two giants? Even if one was just asleep and merely set dressing? A part of me wanted to take her up on this offer. And that part was getting larger...

"Sorry, but no..." In my head I was resolute, but my mouth was trying to let her down gently.

"Okay..."

I wasn't sure I had ever heard her dejected before, but she was now. She also hadn't let go of my hand. Did it bring her some degree of comfort? Maybe. The closer she got to slumber, the less I would have a chance to say something about it. This was fine, I decided.

In time, we both fell asleep.

I was standing. I was in a great, marble palace. I tried to remember how I had gotten there, and was failing. Was that proof that this was a dream? Possibly. I looked around. Behind me, there was a giant throne. On it sat Lyssandra, except she was over 100 feet tall. She was wearing her workout clothes, and there was a crown atop her head. She had her legs crossed, and one fist supported her chin.

"About time you noticed me" she said, with a sense of royal detachment

"Y-you got big..."

This was definitely a dream.

"No. You've just gotten smaller. Then again, you've always been tiny. Small... and insignificant."

There was nothing around to give a sense of scale, but something in me told me that I was right. Dreams have their own sense of logic.

"I love you!" I shouted up at her.

There was no reaction. None at all. Had she not heard me? I tried again.

"I love you!"

"... so?"

The bluntness of the response shocked me. After waiting for my response, and not getting it, she spoke again.

"Many adore me. I am a princess, after all."

The real Lys was not this full of herself.

"No, I mean... I love you and want to be with you!"

“Oh you’ll be with me... as a concubine. My first human one. You’ll have a special leash and collar to designate you.”

Suddenly, out of the ground came several glass boxes, each holding a man, wearing only a collar and briefs. I noticed there was a similar glass box around myself.

“No, no! I mean... Do you love me?”

“Hah! Hahahaha! What a pitiful creature, these humans. Quite perplexing as to how they can even exist in the wild. When they are so, so... weak.”

“You didn’t answer me.”

“Then, your princess deigns to answer. No. I do not love you.”

“R-Really?”

“How could one as important, respected, demanding as I am ever be satisfied with the likes of you? There’s only two parts of you that satisfy me. And even then, I may yet become bored.”

I was silent. I didn’t have a retort.

She uncrossed her legs and stood up. She took two steps forward... and seemed much larger than I initially thought. She reached down, and grabbed the glass box I was in. She did so easily, as though I were a canned soda in the hand of a normal person. She brought my cage to her face, and stared intently at me, narrowing her eyes. (author note: wow that paragraph sucked)

“Tell me, human... What have you done to warrant my attention? Why should I even keep you? I’m sure others of your kind are more physically fit.”

“I...! I like you! A lot! I care about you. You’re cute. The way you do every little thing is cute. I don’t know. The moment our eyes met, days ago something in me felt like... like you were the one. And maybe you are.”

She waited.

“Are you finished?”

“Isn’t that enough? I was just... I was hoping you’d feel the same.”

She tightened her grip on my cage. It wasn’t made of glass, it was made of something else, and it caved under the pressure like aluminum foil. I could see the anger in her eyes.

“How dare you think that’s enough. To think that you and your pathetic feelings are enough to sway me? You aren’t special to me. The moment our eyes met, I was confident that you had a dick, and were willing to use it. And that’s all you’ll be. What did Browning call you? A whore? A prostitute? Such words are too *good* for the likes of you.”

On the word “good”, she tightened her grip again, and my free space in my cage got even smaller.

“Wh-what about the laughs? The complaints about your work? The way you explained everything to me that first breakfast?”

She squeezed the cage again. Clearly this was bothering her.

“Such impudence! I bother speaking to you, and this is the thanks I get? You’re even noisier than that phone. In fact...”

Much like her fourth cellphone, she squeezed my cage as hard as she could. Somehow, the cage put up enough resistance to not cause me physical harm, but I couldn’t move. Then, she hurled my cage at the ground. It hurt, but not as much as it should have. I suppose I should be thankful for the logic of dreams.

“... I should shut you up for good.”

She walked over to where I had landed, and a giant foot was raised above me. I heard a loud thud, before the foot crushed me.

I heard a loud thud, and I was snapped out of the dream. I was still in a cold sweat, however. I caught my breath, and took account of myself. I was in Lyssandra's arms, but being held close. It was like when I had tried to escape that first night. It felt like... like she was protecting me. I could hear her heartbeat. If I hadn't had that dream, I think I might feel protected and safe. At the very least, I felt calmer... as though she was holding me to let me know she cared. I could have been imagining things; maybe this was how she treated every large object in her sleep, like she had a teddy bear as a child. I felt a coldness on my back, and probed behind myself with my foot. Droxannu was no longer present. In fact, now that I was more calm, I could hear her breathing coming from the floor by the bed. She had clearly fallen... or maybe been pushed. In any event, she had fallen off the bed, taking the blanket with her by accident. However, she hadn't noticed, and was still asleep. Lyssandra, too, was still asleep. The room was still nearly pitch black. I decided to try something.

"I love you" I whispered.

She held me a little tighter. There was a noise... I think she sounded pleased. I wasn't sure, however. I guess I would have to try for real tomorrow. It took some time, but slumber consumed me once again.

## Chapter 7

"Seventy-two... Seventy-three..."

I woke up. The windows had been opened, and the light of daybreak entered. Lyssandra was counting, exercising again. But, the repetitions felt slower, and her voice was more strained. I sat up to see what was going on. Droxannu was naked, sitting cross-legged on Lyssandra's back. Lyssandra was doing one-handed pushups, and sweating due to it being a struggle. Droxannu looked at me.

"Chi toku vada fahre." Droxannu said, towards Lyssandra.

"I told you... please speak in English around him. Seventy-eight..."

"Your male has awoken."

"Don't call him that. Eighty. Haaaah, okay, that's eighty per hand."

"As I suspected. You have grown weak."

"Whatever. Remove yourself from me."

"Yes, your highness."

The bodyguard did so, and then looked at me. I could tell she was a little hungover, but not by much. Alternians must have a much faster metabolism than surface-dwellers.

"I understand you carried my spear here. I did not expect you would be up for such a task."

Lyssandra cleared her throat, and it was clearly directed at her friend.

"... Thank you, Timothy." said Droxannu.

"Any time" I smiled, weakly.

Droxannu seemed unsure of how to respond.

The princess got up and stretched. I tried to look away. I was used to the nudity, but I still loved the way that her muscles looked when the light reflected off her body sweat. This morning, my concern was that I loved the parts of her which were not physical. I didn't want to become distracted from that.

"Droxannu. Go use the shower" she commanded

"Princess. It is improper for me to use it before you."

"I'm telling you to do it." She seemed stubborn. It was uncharacteristic, so I assumed there was a reason behind it.

Droxannu folded her arms.

"Then, I refuse. I will use a shower later on."

Lyssandra looked at me, then looked at Droxannu, then back to me, and then sighed.

"Fine. I will do so first. But you WILL use it after I am done." she said, pointing at her friend.

"Very well" said friend's arms were still folded.

The princess walked off, and after a few moments, the shower could be heard running.

"Good morning, Droxannu. You look well." Her hair looked awful, actually. I was determined to reduce today's number of awkward silences, however.

"Thank you. You do, as well."

"How much did you drink last night?"

"Far too much, it seems. I was not keeping count of my own drinks; my only objective was to drink more than the men in front of me."

"I hear you succeeded."

"Very good. I was uncertain."

"Wow, you don't remember falling forward onto the table?"

"Sadly, no."

"Well, for what it's worth, I found it impressive."

"... thank you."

I had to switch gears to keep the conversation going. At least, for as long as the shower was on.

"Have you been the princess's bodyguard for long?"

"No. I was conscripted into service when the princess was given her mission. Rather, those of us studying surface languages were asked if we were willing to visit to the surface. I said yes. This was the result."

"Ah, the old switcheroo, eh?"

"... I am not familiar with these terms."

"A bait and switch. You agreed to one thing, but when it happened it wasn't what you expected."

"Indeed."

"What were you doing before that? I mean, other than studying surface languages."

"I stood guard outside my father's shop."

"Oh? Men in Alterna can run businesses?"

"Yes, with the permission of their master. Mistress? With the permission of the woman in charge of them."

I was going to ask more about that, but I heard the shower turn off. Lyssandra came out, wearing her bathrobe.

"There, I am done, now go."

"But, Pri--"

"Go." she pointed. Droxannu obeyed.

There was no noise until the shower could be heard. I spoke first.

"There's something I want to talk to you about."

She sighed, then walked to the side of the bed, and sat down on the floor. I was sitting on the bed. This made me taller than her, for a change.

"Yes, please, proceed."

I nodded.

"I realize this is sudden, but I think I love you. I wanted to know if you felt the same way."

She sighed again.

"I was afraid it was that..." she said.

I wasn't sure what to say to that, so I merely cocked my head to the side, and waited for more.

"Damn it... why, though. Why did you have to love me, too?"

"I... I'm sorry, what?"

"I... I also think you're nice. I felt the spark of 'love'... but I've been trying to suppress it."

"Why? Is it because you're Alternian? Because you're a princess? Because I'm a man."



"It's because... it's because..." She let out a large exhale and her royal posture sank. It didn't take a body linguist to realize that she was sad, and had just now removed a facade. "It's because I am betrothed."

"You... you're what?"

"Betrothed. Promised to another."

"I'm familiar with the concept, but Ms. Browning said your people didn't have marriage."

"We don't. Not in the traditional sense. No, this arrangement is one of political importance. In fact, it was meant for another, and due to... circumstances, it fell to me."

She looked downright ready to cry.

"I don't understand. Who could you be betrothed to?"

"The third princess of Athernan. Lilalya Crismar Athernan." Her lip curled, as though she hated saying the name.

"Athernan? I'm not familiar."

She took a deep breath in, then out.

"Right, because I've never told you. You know that I am Lyssandra Selfina Awasoruk, sixth princess of the kingdom of Awasoruk, correct?"

I nodded.

"Awasoruk is not the only kingdom in Alterna. There are actually three. Awasoruk, Athernan, and Matourat. Awasoruk is the only kingdom interested in interacting peacefully with the outside world."

"So, your kingdom is the only one making agreements with the surface governments?"

"That's right. We're hoping to cement our relationship with the outside world. Ideally, we will also be trading some of our Brozium for technology which will give us an advantage."

"I see..." I didn't see, but it was what one said.

"Matourat wants to expand its territory to the outside world. Athernan wants to dominate and enslave. We've been at war before even hearing about the surface world, for similar differences in philosophy."

"I see. What about that third princess? Lilylala?"

"Lilalya. She, like most Athernan royalty, is known for her strength and cruelty. But, my mother decided that, if we were going to start talking to the outside, it was better to ally our country with the Athernans to take out the Matourat. Between those who seek enslavement and those who seek genocide, the enslavers are the lesser of two evils. My mother further planned to use surface technology to back-stab the Athernans after the Matourat were taken out."

"So, you were going to be that princess's... wife?"

"No, I'm going to be her slave. The outline of the deal, while very politically crafted, essentially states that the Awasoruk princess will be subservient to the Athernan."

"... So why are you up here?"

"I was not the one to be betrothed, initially. Initially, it was the fifth princess, (XXX). My half-sister. Lilalya claimed that during their first meeting, (XXX) attacked her. She furthermore claims that she killed (XXX) in self-defense. Self-defense... She... She crushed my sister's skull! With her bare hands!"

She had been fighting it off before, but Lyssandra was now outright crying. I noticed the shower shut off, but I wasn't going to say anything.

“And now... and now, in order to ‘preserve our alliance’, the duty of serving that foul beast falls to me, the next princess. I found out about this not two days before we met.”

“I, uh... I don’t suppose you could tell her that you’ve already got a lover?”

“Lover? Hah! It isn’t that I don’t love you, but... If we are to be together, by the terms of the agreement, you will be her property as well. So... I really wanted... I wanted to not like you. Not this much. You need to give up on me.”

Droxannu stood naked in front of the doorway. She was dry, at least. I suppose there was only the one bathrobe in Alternan size. She spoke.

“Princess, you can’t...”

“Go back to the bathroom.” she said through tears

“But---”

“YOUR PRINCESS ORDERS YOU TO **GO!**”

The shout was so loud, I felt it resonate in my bones. The bed shook. I wouldn’t be surprised if it woke up neighbors in the floors above and below.

“Yes, your highness.” Droxannu left, and we waited to hear the bathroom door close.

“You poor angel” I said, standing up out of the bed.

She pushed me. I fell back onto the bed.

“Stop it. I can’t have feelings for you. I don’t want to. Please, just... bare with me, and give me a purely physical relationship. It’s what I need right now.”

“Does... does Ms. Browning know?”

“No. Thank the gods I was told on Saturday. I had stopped crying on Monday.”

“I see... And then on Monday, you met me.”

“Correct. I... I should have known better, but I just wanted some... physical joy to help me get through this. You’ve been very helpful to me throughout this. I will shower you with gifts. As compensation.”

“... That kinda makes me a prostitute, doesn’t it? No, I don’t require payment.”

I was still on the fence as to if I was going to let Ms. Browning pay me.

“But... but I can’t return your affections. It’s unfair.”

“I really liked these past four days we spent together. If the next... however many days are just like them, and no more, I would be fine with it.”

“Truly?”

“Love doesn’t demand to be repaid. It just wants to know. Loving someone shouldn’t be contingent on a response. Hell, now that I know, any attempts you make to drive me away will be ineffective. No, I... I just want to support you.”

“... Thank you. Let us now go to breakfast.”

“We should probably get Droxannu first.”