

## Chapter 29

The air was thick, heavy, and charged with the promise of a storm. His lips were a breath away from hers, the culmination of a day of tension and a night of torment.

And then he stopped.

He tilted his head, his lips brushing against the sensitive skin of her neck, right over the frantic pulse of her carotid artery. He inhaled deeply, a shudder wracking his powerful frame.

"Mark me," he whispered, his voice a raw, broken plea against her skin. "Anja. Please. Make me yours. Not just by law. In soul."

The request hit her with the force of a physical blow. It wasn't a demand for pleasure. It was an offering of self. He was asking her to take everything—his life, his freedom, his very essence—and bind it to her own. It was the ultimate act of submission, the most profound declaration of loyalty a man in this world could make.

Anja stared at the place where his neck met his shoulder, her mind a white-water rush of conflicting instincts. This was too fast. He was asking for the one thing she couldn't take back—a permanent bond that would tie his soul to hers forever. The cautious voice of the scientist she had been, the woman who analyzed risks and calculated outcomes, screamed at her to stop.

But beneath the caution, something older stirred. A memory surfaced—not of this world, but of her old one. Earth. The sterile lab. The endless, quiet evenings alone in her apartment, surrounded by data sets and plant specimens and a silence so deep it felt like drowning. She had been respected there. Competent. But she had never been needed. Not like this. No one had ever looked at her the way Enzo was looking at her now—like she was the only solid thing in a universe that had been crumbling around him for years.

He was a killer. A manipulator. A man who had torn his way across the galaxy leaving bodies in his wake. But in this moment, with his lips pressed to her pulse and his entire body trembling against hers, he was also the man who had knelt at her feet and offered her everything he had. Every credit. Every secret. Every scar.

She thought of the 94 percent. The patch of fur on his neck. The way he had let her walk into his mind and burn away the darkness, trusting her completely even when it might have killed him. He had been fighting alone for so long. Just like she had, in a different way, on a different

world.

The last thread of her resistance didn't snap. It dissolved. Quietly. Completely.

She tilted her head back, exposing the elegant line of her throat in a gesture of pure, instinctual acceptance. She opened her mouth, and with a decisiveness that came from a place deeper than thought, she bit down on the hard, warm muscle of his shoulder.

Her teeth broke the skin. The coppery taste of his blood filled her mouth. And she pushed.

She poured her S-Class psionic will, a torrent of golden energy, through the point of contact. It wasn't a purification. It was a branding. She felt her energy surge into him, wrapping around his psionic core, sinking into his very soul and leaving an indelible, shimmering mark of her ownership.

A strangled cry, half pain, half ecstatic release, was torn from Enzo's throat. He arched his back, his hands gripping her hips so tightly she was sure he would leave bruises. He felt the golden chains lock around his soul, a willing, joyous prisoner.

The moment the Mark settled, the last of his control shattered.

With a roar that was more beast than man, he surged to his feet, lifting her with him as if she weighed nothing. He strode from the bathroom, water streaming from their bodies, and crossed the bedroom in three long, predatory strides. He threw her onto the center of the massive bed, the mattress groaning under the impact.

The night was a blur of tangled limbs, sharp teeth, and whispered promises. It was a storm, a tempest, and she was at its center.

Sometime in the hazy hours before dawn, a sliver of rational thought returned to Anja. She was exhausted, her body ached in places she didn't know could ache, and he was still going.

"Enzo," she moaned, trying to push against his immovable chest. "Stop. I have to... go to the Citadel... tomorrow."

He answered by capturing her lips in a deep, bruising kiss, silencing her protests. The beast was in control now, and it was insatiable.

Finally, as the first pale light of dawn crept through the windows, the storm subsided. Anja lay sprawled on the pillows, feeling like she had been run over by a freight train. She mustered the last of her strength and delivered a weak, pathetic punch to his chest. It was like hitting a wall of granite.

"Water," she croaked, her voice a raw whisper. "And a massage. Now."

The beast was gone. The loyal, devoted puppy was back.

"Yes, Mistress," he purred, his voice filled with a deep, bone-deep



satisfaction. He immediately padded off to the kitchen. He returned a moment later with a glass of honeyed water, which he held for her while she drank.

His fluffy wolf tail reappeared, and he used it to gently, soothingly sweep across her aching back, a living, breathing heating pad. Under the gentle pressure and the warmth, her frown eased, and she drifted into a deep, exhausted sleep.

When she woke a few hours later, the sun was high in the sky. She stretched, bracing for the wave of soreness and pain she knew was coming.

But it never came.

She sat up, her body feeling... incredible. Not just rested. She felt powerful. Energized. She closed her eyes and focused inward. Her psionic reserves, which had been scraped to the bottom, were now full to overflowing. Her core felt stronger, denser, more vibrant than ever before.

She understood.

Psionic Resonance. The S-Class ability her mother's 'Codex' had so graphically described. Intimacy with a highly compatible Consort didn't drain her. It recharged her. It was a biological supercharger.

A slow, dangerous smile spread across her face. Oh, the possibilities.

Enzo entered the room, already dressed in a fresh, immaculate suit. He carried a tray laden with a lavish breakfast. He saw her, awake and glowing, and a look of immense pride filled his dark eyes.

"Good morning my love," he murmured, placing the tray on the bed.

After a breakfast she felt she had well and truly earned, Anja stretched languidly. "Carry me," she commanded.

He obeyed without hesitation, sweeping her into his arms. He carried her down the grand, curving staircase like a conquering hero carrying his spoils.

Bradford was waiting in the living room.

He stood ramrod straight, his uniform perfect, his face a mask of cold professionalism. But Anja's eyes were sharp. She saw the dark circles under his eyes. And she saw the fresh, barely-healed bruise on his forehead, right at the hairline. A bruise that looked suspiciously like it had been made by repeatedly hitting one's head against a wall.

A pang of guilt, sharp and unwelcome, pierced her satisfaction. She had been so caught up in her own pleasure, she had completely forgotten about her other Consort's pain. She quickly suppressed the feeling, choosing to pretend she hadn't seen it.

Bradford's gaze flickered to Enzo's possessive hold, to the way Anja was

nestled comfortably in his arms. His jaw tightened, but he said nothing

"The transport is ready, Mistress," he said, his voice flat. "The armored military shuttle is fueled and waiting."

"A shuttle?" Enzo scoffed. "You want her to ride in a tin can? My private starship, the Nightfall, is far more comfortable. And faster."

"The shuttle is secure," Bradford shot back, his voice rising. "It's designed for hostile environments!"

"The Nightfall has void shields that could withstand a supernova!"

Anja sighed, the sound loud in the tense room. She slid out of Enzo's arms, landing gracefully on her feet.

"Enough" she said, her voice quiet but carrying the unmistakable weight of command. "Both of you. I've already made a decision."