Trial and Error

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by voltagelisa
Chapter 1

Shepard rested her head on her lover's chest, her eyes drifting close in content as she lay there. He was awake stroking her back lightly with his talons, his chin rested on top of her head. She smiled slightly as she heard him purr.

"So, when do you see Udina?" he asked, breaking the silence in the room. She stiffened against him, her eyes narrowing at that name. I hated that man with a passion and he had to bring him up while we were in bed. Shepard thought with a glower. "You know, you just killed any chances of you having sex today by bringing up his name in bed!" She grumbled, scowling up at him.

"Really," he drawled, his claw digging in my skin slightly, just enough to puncture, but not enough to do major damage. She arched her back groaning, as a shiver of pleasure racing through her body. His other hand cupped her chin forcing her face up to his, "You were saying?" he mocked, his leathery tongue darting out, licking her lips until they opened. Their tongues tangled and danced until she grasped it between her teeth lightly and then sucked on it. He growled, his claws digging deeper into my skin.

She felt his plates shift against her leg but not open yet, with one hand she found the soft seam of the plates that hid him from view. Her nimble fingers coaxing them open more. He shuddered beneath her, his one hand finding her center, flicking her nub with his talon until she had her moaning against his neck.

He watched the human as he pleasured her, wondering how this had happened. For three months now they have been lovers. There was respect, lust, friendship between, but nothing more. She was human and he was a Turian, together the learned how to pleasure each other, where sensitive spots were. She was the first human he had ever bedded.

His finger slipped inside of her, she gazed at him with passion filled eyes. With each stroke of her hand on his hardened flesh was becoming harder for him to think.

His first time with her had started off as awkward, embarrassing and then she had changed that with her wise cracks and straight forward attitude. What had started out as a mess had turned into one of the best learning experiences that he has had the pleasure of.

"Will you quit teasing me and shove yourself inside of me!" she panted, her demanded sounding more like a plea.

"Not yet..." he trailed off, moving his position lower on her body, letting his tongue replace his fingers. The first time he had tried this was with an Asari and he hadn't enjoyed it. Though with her he enjoyed her reactions, he loved watching her come apart for him.

He let his tongue slip inside of her and she screamed, her hips bucking beneath his one hand that held her hips still. His eyes widened, he hadn't thought she was that close to finding release but he didn't care. He moved quickly, sheathing himself deep within his with one savage thrust.

He had always thought because humans were soft you had to be extra careful of them, but she proved him wrong or maybe it was just her. He didn't have to hold back with her, he could treat her like another Turian female. He pounded into her, feeling her muscles clamp around him like a vice as she found her release once again.

He spread her legs apart wide so he could burry himself deeper within her. He let his instincts ride him as he sunk his sharp teeth into her shoulder just before finding his release. She orgasm once more as he released deep within her milking him. Humans were so different than Turian, once a female Turian orgasms shortly after they were finished for the night. Yet this human here could go multiply times without a problem and still look for more later in the night.

"Man, I love a good wake up call," she smirked, her eye lids heavy as she lay there sated. Chellick chuckled, flopping down beside her, sated for now.

He scowled as her omni-tool went off indicating that a message was sent to her. "How much you want bet that it's Captain Anderson?" she grinned, waiting to see if he would take her up on the bet.
"And what's the stakes?" Challick asked with a raised brow ridge.
"If I win, you're making the breakfast this morning, if you win, I'll cook." She smirked as he groaned.
"Not a chance, try something else, because you're not cooking again," he smirked as she glared at him. "How about whoever loses buys dinner tonight?"
"You're on," she grinned, opening the message. Chellick watched as she read the missive her eyes narrowing. "It was Captain Anderson, Udina and him wish to speak with me asap." she muttered. "Asap?" Chellick looked at her confused.
"An acronym for as soon as possible, or in human term – now," She grimaced. He watched as she climbed out of the bed, her taunt muscles flowing under her silky skin. He watched as she made her way to his bathroom shaking his head.

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Udina and Captain Anderson stood in the room as Shepard entered. Her eyes narrowing she spotted Udina quickly turning to undisguised disgust. Anderson tried to hide his amusement as he saw this. "You wanted me here Captain Anderson?" She commented, purposefully ignoring Udina as she moved over to Anderson.
"Yes, I'm assembling a team for the SSV Normandy. She takes her first flight in three days times. I want you on that team as my CO." Commander Anderson stated hiding his amusement when her eyes widened.
"Okay, when do we depart?" Shepard asked him trying to hide her excitement.
"O' seven hundred hours in three days time," he answered her, his voice firm and full of Command.
"Yes sir!" Shepard snapped to attention saluting smartly just before taking her leave.
"Not so fast Shepard!" Udina whining voice stopped her, he moved directly in her path so she couldn't try and escape.

Captain Anderson shook his head at the stupidity of the man. Anderson knew Shepard hated Udina with a passion and wondered what she would do, and hoped wouldn't he have to intervene.
She stood there glaring at the ambassador waiting for him to speak. She crossed her arms over her chest giving Udina a withering stare. "I've been informed by the council that a Specter will be on board during The Normandy's first flight." Anderson look at Udina in shock that he was bringing this up.
"Who is the Specter?" she asked, her curiosity peaked.
"Nihlus," Anderson answered her. Her eyes widened, a smirk forming on her mouth. "You know him?" he asked not surprised in the least. Shepard usually spent most of her time with aliens, she was more comfortable with them than her own kind. As she said, Turian are more forthright than humans, at least when confronted they will tell you the truth. A human will lie until he has no other choice. "I've met him a few times," she shrugged with a grin splitting her face as we both stared at her. She turned and left. "I'm not sure she is the best choice for this mission. I know humanity needs a hero but she spends too much of her time with the aliens if you ask me." Udina spat once Shepard was out of hearing range.
"Maybe, but people listen to her. She has what most humans or aliens don't have; a commanding presence." Anderson said with a pointed look at Udina.
"That is the only reason she is perfect for this job." He muttered. "You'll have to watch her around that Turian. I've heard that at the moment she has a Turian lover."
"That maybe to our advantage, we want her as a specter...." Anderson trailed off with a pointed look at Udina. Udina watched Captain Anderson for a moment and then nodded his head in agreement. He understood the unspoken words that Anderson had said.

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Shepard walked around the Presidium planning on picking up some new weapons for this new mission. She wondered how long she would be gone from the Citadel this time and what she would do to amuse herself without her lover there.
She took a seat at a restaurant that was run by a Turian. Her and Chellick come here quite often for supper. She glanced up as someone took a seat across from her, her eyes widen as she saw Nihlus
sitting there. "Doesn't the council have something for you to do?" she asked him with a smirk.
"No, there is nothing until I board the Normandy." He answered her, as he took the menu from her
limp hand. "I heard you're CO on this mission, it'll be good working with you."
"Nihilus, what are you up to?" she asked with a penetrating stare that he hated. Most of the time,
those penetrating gazes saw way too much. For a small woman she had the respect of a lot of high
officials on the Citadel it was surprising when he found this out through Chellick. When he first met
her he didn't know what to make of her. She was human, small, but she had a mind and knew how
to use it. At first he couldn't see what Chellick saw in her until he joined them for supper one
evening.
She hadn't spoken to him as an alien to be distrusted. She had treated him as an equal. Making him
comfortable as they spoke, it was the first time that he actually enjoyed being in the presence of a
human.
"Nothing Shepard, just enjoying the time off," Nihilus grinned as she gave him a disbelieving look.
"Nihilus, you don't take time off, or at least that what Chellick tells me when he's bitching about
you," she grinned smugly as he glared at her. "So what can you tell me about this mission?" she
asked. Nihilus watched her for a few moments not sure how much her superiors told her.
"From what I understand we are supposed to making quite a few stops basically testing out the new
ship seeing what it is capable of," he answered, shrugging his shoulder hoping she didn't notice that
he was holding anything back from her. One of her most annoying trait she was tenacious when she
wanted an answer and didn't stop until she had her answer.
"Yeah, but that makes no sense, why would they need a specter on board, especially one of your
stature? Saren is the only other specter that is more respected." She muttered, giving me a searching
look.
"Look at the ship we are going to be on? Its state of the art, made by Turain and human working
together. The council will want this watched closely by the best at the moment." He answered her
with a pointed look.
"True, but something still doesn't sit right with this," she muttered. Nihilus rolled his eyes at her. Her
other annoying trait that made it hard for a person to hide things from her, as she calls it, 'her gut
feelings', usually they are never wrong. That was what saved her countless of times and other people
that served with her.
"You may be right, who knows," he shrugged, trying his best for nonchalance.
"Don't give me that crap, you would know," she scowled at him.
"Commander, you know better than that," Nihilus stated in a harsh warning tone, her eyes widen for
a moment before narrowing into slits that had the Turian shifting in his seat. He glanced around
himself taking in the place, wondering how much it would cost for repairs if she attacked.
He narrowed his eyes challengingly, not afraid of going hand to hand with her. She had basic
training, enough to hold her own for a short while, but he could take her easily. No, that wasn't his
worry, it was her biotics. Now that was something scary. Most people were in contact with eezo
once in their life time causing them to have biotic powers. But with Shepard she was in contact three
different times, once while in her mother's womb and the other two times through the Alliance. They
saw how powerful she was as she a child, at puberty she had another dose of eezo, then implanted
with the L3. Before her 16th birthday they gave her another doze of eezo. With the final dose they
continued her training.
When Nihilus had read her personal data he had been shocked. He has known her for a month or
more and never once would he have guessed with what he read. She was named one of the most
powerful biotics for a human, did her training as an adept. Was the best in her class except for hand
to hand. There she failed miserably. Her marksmanship wasn't bad, though there was area of
improvement needed. But she didn't need that, not with her biotic training.
"Nihilus, don't patronize me," she stated coldly, her hands starting to glow. She sat there focusing on
her hands taking deep breaths relaxing herself. Her one big problem - losing of control of her biotics.
There was nothing to be done about it, that was the Alliances fault for exposing to eezo so much. But
Nihilus understood why they did it, she was a natural at it, she learned how to use her abilities early,
surpassing others of her age and older than her.

And that was why she always had a partner in her bed, Chellick had explained that to him once when we had been out drinking, she does that to wear herself out, it seems to help her. She had peak his curiosity when Chellick told him about her biotics.

"Shepard, you know the rules, even if there is something going on, I can't say a word." Nihlus sighed shaking his head when her eyes brightened.

"Fine you win," she muttered with what human's called a pout. It was amusing to see.

"So why are you here?" Nihlus asked, trying to change the subject.

"Chellick supposed to meet me here. He lost the bet this morning so he is buying supper," she answered grinning. Her eyes shifted over his shoulder. Nihlus shoulders tensed waiting for who was behind him to make themselves known.

"Nihlus, good to see you again," Chellick greeted, taking a seat beside Shepard. Eyes around the room darted towards our table, some curious other hostile as they watched a human with two Turians

"How is it going in Csec lately?" Nihlus asked.

"It was fine, until Garrus dropped by. He doesn't like all the red tape, I don't blame him, but you have to follow the rules." Chellick muttered running a hand over the back of his head in frustration.

"I'm glad I'm a specter, makes life a lot easier." Nihlus grinned at his friend.

"Who's Garrus?" Shepard asked the two Turians

"Garrus Vakarian, he a good officer, gets results, but he's a hot head. Hates the red tape, it don't bother him to take drastic measures to get the guy he is after." Chellick grumbled tiredly.

"Hmm, interesting fellow," Shepard grinned.

"If you ever meet him the two of you will either get along famously or you'll kill him. I'm not sure which," Chellick said with a wide Turian smile, his mandible faired out showing sharp pointed teeth. Nihlus chuckled shaking his head.

"She would probably kill him," Nihlus joked

"Have you eaten today?" Chellick asked as he noticed that fatigue started to weigh heavily her.

"Nope, did some shopping for the mission, then came here. I've been talking with Nihlus and never thought of it after that," Shepard smiled lamely.

"Mission?" Chellick questioned.

"Nihlus and I are going to be on the Normandy's first run," Shepard answered him. Nihlus waved over the waiter giving him our order. Shepard leaned back in her chair tiredly, now that her body has used most of her nutrients and she needed them replenished soon.

The sat back as the waiter placed their plates in front of them. Shepard dug in as if she hadn't eaten for weeks. Chellick had seen her eat often enough to know she needed this food. "So when do you leave?" Chellick asked.

"I leave at seven in the morning in three days time," she answered when her mouth wasn't full. "I'll need to go to your place and pick up a few things that I've left there."

"We can do that once we are done here," Chellick answered.

"Then I'll be going back to my place," she said pointedly at Chellick before he thought she would be spending another night at his place.

"We will have to see about that," Chellick murmured with a challenging look. She glared at him as he placed a hand on her thighs beneath the table, she tensed as his claw played with her pants, the sharpened point glided along her skin through the material making her hyper sensitive.

"Don't even think it," Shepard grumbled halfheartedly.

He leaned towards her, "Too late," he murmured chuckling as she scowled at him.

"Nihlus, do something with him before you have to arrest me," Shepard smirked at the Turian across from her.

"You're on your own Shepard." Nihlus grinned, rising from his chair. He nodded to the two of them before leaving the table.

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Shepard lay on her bed, going over Chellick's parting words, "Why don't we invite Nihlus over again?" he had asked her. There was no way in hell she would be sleeping with two Turian's at the
same time ever again. She had done it the first time because it had caught her interest and she was curious. But after that, she wasn't going to do it again. Nihlus had to use the medigel that he always keeps on him on her injuries. The human body wasn't made for two Turians, not with their teeth and claws or how vigorous lovers they were.

They weren't gentle like humans, no, they were the type to allow their nature loose. She was still amazed that her and Chellick were still together, what had started off as a one night stand turned into what they were now - friends with benefits.

She wasn't sure what she would do once she boards the Normandy, fraternization was frowned upon. Plus she used sex to keep her biotics in check, it was the best way to wear her out other than physical training.

Two more days and she was back in space where she felt at home, she couldn't wait. Though she wasn't sure how she felt with Nihlus going on this trip, the council wouldn't send him unless there was something important. That irked her, there was something going on and she didn't know about it, her own people were hiding it from her.

At least Nihlus had been up front and told her he couldn't divulge anything, unlike her superiors. She wasn't impressed that Captain Anderson didn't tell her, she's known him for the longest time, usually served under him. It didn't hurt her feelings that he hid this, but it irked her.

So she let sleep finally claim her as her brain went through different scenarios why a specter would be on this run.
Shepard went through her things, packing most of it up for her trip on board the Normandy. She didn't have much to her name; a few pictures, clothes, and weapons. Most of her stuff, except for her guns, could be carried in one case; the guns had a case of their own. She went through her weaponry, grinning as she held the pistol that Nihlus had given her a few weeks ago, and the other one that Chellick had given her when he saw her eyeing it in the store. She placed the last gun in the case, gathered the remainder of her pictures and her clothes and she was done. Chellick was still at work, so she couldn't say goodbye to him until later. Now she was bored; she thought packing would take longer than it had. She gave her apartment a quick glance, hoping she hadn't forgotten anything. The only thing left was her armor, which needed replacing; scorch marks marred it.
Glad for an excuse to do something, she grabbed her money to go shopping for new armor. The best place was at C-Sec; they had an assortment of weapons and armor that she could use. She only wished she could get her hands on the better stuff; but she wasn't a Spectre, so that was out. She was about to leave when she was stopped dead at the door. "Nihlus, what are you doing here?" she asked, staring at the Turian in the hall. She hadn't expected to see him again until she boarded the Normandy. She was shocked that he even knew where she lived; but, being a Spectre, he would have known or found out easily enough.
"Bored, stopped by to kill time," he muttered with a halfhearted shrug.
"Hmm, well I was going shopping at C-Sec for new armor," she told him as she locked her door and moved past him into the hallway.
"Do you want company?" he asked as they walked together to the elevators.
"Do you need to pick up anything?" she asked, curious as to why he would want to accompany her.
"No, I already upgraded my stuff on my last mission," he smirked. After months of being around Turians she was finally able to read their expressions, almost as well as humans.
"Lucky you," she muttered, waiting for the elevator to stop.
"What are you doing after you pick up some armor?" he asked, awkwardly trying to make idle conversation. Usually Chellick was there and Nihlus and he would talk, but the Turian Spectre had been bored and decided to get to know the Commander better.
"Eating. I'm starving," she grinned at him, leading the way to the C-Sec Requisitions Officer. The stoic Turian sat behind his table, his eyes widening when he saw Nihlus walking up with Shepard. He was used to seeing the pair, but never together.
"Something I can do for you, Shepard?" he asked her, since Nihlus stayed in the background.
"Yeah, I need new light armor," she stated, waiting patiently as he pulled up the list. She glanced over it, sighing sadly; she already had the best armor available. "Nothing new?" she asked hopefully.
"No, you already have the best I can offer you. If you were a Spectre, I could offer you better equipment," he answered, exiting out of the list. He turned his attention to Nihlus as he stepped up beside Shepard.
"Let her see the Spectres’ stock," Nihlus ordered. This was going against regulations and the officer knew it, but who was he to question a Spectre? He pulled up the list, and Shepard remained behind Nihlus so he could do his shopping.
She looked at the Turian, confused when he stepped back and motioned her forward. She glanced at the list, her eyes widening. "Man, you Spectres are damned lucky," she muttered, glaring at him half heartedly.
"I would hurry up and finish shopping so you can eat," Nihlus smirked as she stared at him in shock. She glanced through the list, finding the armor she wanted; swallowing nervously at the price tag attached to it. She had the money for it, but it wouldn't leave her much to spare. She glanced at the next one down. It was cheaper, but not much better than the one she had. "I'll take that one," she grumbled, selecting the armor that would burn a huge hole in her finances.
"We have your measurements here already; it will be at your apartment by evening," he told her as she went to pass him her chit card. He was about to take it, but the Turian beside her stopped him. She narrowed her eyes at him. "Nihlus, I need that armor. It has better shields than the one I have," she explained irritably.

Nihlus ignored her, passing the Requisitions Officer his credit chit. Her eyes narrowed further at this. He had noticed the stiffening of her shoulders when she saw the price and realized that this purchase would hurt her financially. She didn't make as much money as Spectres did; he knew he could pay for this easily as his own armor usually cost twice as much as hers would.

"You need better stuff than what you have if you are going to working with me. I'll get this, you get lunch," he ordered in a sharp tone that usually made people step back and give in to him. She snorted and chuckled. "You really need to work on your commanding presence," she smirked.

"You are not buying my armor for me. I'll buy it myself," she stated coldly when he didn't back down. She turned to the merchant, her eyes narrowing into slits. The Requisitions Officer fidgeted as he tried to avoid her gaze, but she caught his and held it. Once again she passed him her credit chit, and he didn't know what to do. Two deadly people were standing in front of him, arguing over who was going to pay. And it was all up to him; whichever chit card he took was going to pay.

Nihlus had his 'killers' look on him, while Shepard looked like she was ready to shove that chit down his throat. After they left, he planned on putting up a sign that said 'One Patron at a Time'. Maybe that would save him the next time, if he lived through this.

He stared at the duo indecisively, his head snapping towards Nihlus when a growl of warning left him. Shepard started to smile and it wasn't a reassuring sight. It was a baring of teeth; not as scary as a Turian’s teeth, but that wasn’t what froze him. It was the look in her eyes; her thoughts were written plainly on her face and it didn't matter what race you were, it was easy to read. 'You take his credit chit and I'll shove it down your throat' was the message her eyes conveyed.

The Requisitions Officer swallowed a few times. "When the armor is dropped off, you can pay for it," he muttered hastily, hoping to avoid his death. He hadn't thought it would be deadly working here, but with these two, he had been proven wrong. He wasn't afraid of death in the least; but with the looks these two promised, he knew it would be painful and take a very long time for him to die.

"Fine, I'll be at my apartment this evening," she stated, before turning around and leaving, Nihlus following behind her. The Requisitions Office breathed a sigh of relief, slumping in his chair as he watched the two of them walk away.

"Did you really have to scare him that way?" Shepard asked her Turian companion irritably.

"Well, you wouldn't accept my favor," he hissed.

"I think I'm missing something here," she muttered, eyeing him warily. "Why are you so insulted, Nihlus?" she asked him.

"Shepard, you've been with Chellick for months and you are telling me you don't know?" he asked, his voice thick with disbelief.

"Shepard, you've been with Chellick for months and you are telling me you don't know?" he asked, his voice thick with disbelief.

"Well, he's never tried to get me anything other than that gun," she shrugged nonchalantly.

"Hrm, and I gave you a gun too, but you didn't throw it back at me. So, what is the difference this time?" he asked curiously.

"The difference would be the price, Nihlus, and what happened the night before you gave me that gun," she grumbled, not meeting his eyes. He stopped and stared at her, trying to figure out exactly what she was meant.

"What does that have to do with anything?" he asked curiously. Humans were confusing to him; they had odd customs that he didn't understand, and some even had rules that he didn't understand. He had asked Shepard about it once, and she had looked at him in shock herself. He remembered that time; he had listened to Chellick talk about his experiences with Shepard and decided to sleep with a human. He had been confused when the human said no; she was saving herself for marriage. He hadn't understood what that meant until he'd asked Shepard.

"Let's just say there are vast differences in our cultures and leave it at that," she muttered, breaking him of his thoughts.

Nihlus watched her for a moment, not sure what to do. He wanted to know why Shepard wouldn’t
accept his offer to buy the armor; though it didn't really matter, since he fully intended to pay for the suit when it arrived at her apartment.

They went to the closest diner. She ordered for herself and his eyes widened yet again. He didn't think she would be able to finish what she had ordered. Yet again, he was wrong. They ate in silence and she cleaned her plate as if a famine was coming. "I have to eat lots since I'm a biotic. We expend too much energy not to," she grumbled defensively when she saw him staring at her.

"Yes, I heard something about that before," he smirked as her cheeks colored. It was interesting seeing a human turn colors; it actually looked like it hurt. She was about to say something, but her omnitool beeped, signaling an incoming message.

She read it over quickly, tapping a few keys before closing the omnitool. "Chellick won't be free this evening so he wishes me luck on the mission," she grinned. She didn't look too broken up that he wasn't showing up on her final night on the station. It reinforced Nihlus’ assumptions about the relationship between them. Obviously, it was only for mutual desire. There were no emotions other than friendship and respect.

"So, what will you do tonight?" he asked her as they relaxed before leaving the diner.

"Haven't got a clue. Die of boredom, I guess," she frowned, rolling her eyes.

They left the restaurant, heading back to her apartment. Once inside, she placed the few things that she picked up in her case.

Nihlus leaned against the wall, watching her as she moved around the room quickly. "Do you want something to drink?" she asked, holding up a bottle of wine. She watched him as he walked over to her, taking the bottle from her.

"You shouldn't be drinking the night before a big mission," he reprimanded her lightly, placing the bottle back in the cupboard. She watched as he went to her fridge, looking for something to drink. She hadn’t bothered to shop, so the only available items were juice and a red concoction for Turians.

He raised a brow when he saw the red jug. "Where did you get this from?" he asked her, pouring a glass for himself.

"Chellick left it here," she shrugged as he emptied the jug.

Shepard’s alarm sounded, signaling that it was five in the morning. She curled up to Nihlus for a moment before stretching. She wanted to be at the ship well before seven. "Why do you have your alarm set so early?" he asked with a grumble, holding her closer. His plates were already shifted, allowing his erection to spring free and rub against her leg. He gasped at the unusual sensation of it, his sensitive flesh meeting her warm, soft skin.

"I want to be at the ship before seven," she told him, attempting to leave the bed. Nihlus stopped her when he rolled her onto her back.

"You're not leaving yet," he murmured, nipping at her skin in the process. His tongue soothed the area his teeth had been. She ran her hand along his fringe; with an impish smile she grasped them firmly, pulling his head away from her. She leaned into his mouth, licking one of his mandibles before sucking on it. He hissed, allowing them to flair out so she would have easier access.

This was a first for him; other than the couple of times he had been with her. Last night, she had shown him what humans could do with their mouths when she had taken him. His flesh disappeared between her lips as her head moved up and down. He had been in utter shock at the pleasure coursing through his body. This was something he had never experienced before. He had watched her, staying absolutely still, not sure what to do. With even breaths, he had forced himself not to allow his body to control him. When he had taken all he could, she found herself against the wall, Nihlus pounding himself into her.

The very first time he had been with her, Chellick had been there, as well. He had been the one pleasing her, readying her. All Nihlus did was mount her as he would another Turian. So, he had never had a chance to learn how to please a human the way his friend had.

This time she was pinned beneath him and he planned on giving her the same amount of pleasure she had given him the previous night. He wasn't sure what to do and felt very awkward with his lack of knowledge. He nipped her shoulder once again, as he knew she enjoyed that. She grasped his fringe again, bringing his face close to her own. She licked his neck and he barely felt it; his skin was too
thick for play like that. He shivered as she locked her teeth onto his neck, close to the underside of his chin, near one of a Turian’s soft spots.

He grasped her hands, pinning them above her head. He straddled her waist, looking down at her in wonder. She had dark, soft skin, and round milk glands protruding from her chest. Her muscles showed beneath her skin as she twisted in his gasp. Her bright green eyes watched him, waiting to see what he was going to do next. They were alert, not passion filled as they had been when she had laid with him and Chellick. His gaze shifted from those eyes to her mouth, where lush lips parted and a pink tongue darted out. Humans were interesting and unusual in their physiques. He wondered if they were like female Turians, where they found their release only once during lovemaking.

Last night had been more fumbling on his part. He wasn't sure if she found pleasure or not. He leaned down, licking across her lips; her pink tongue darting out to meet his own. It tasted sweet, not bad at all. He slipped his tongue into her mouth as he had seen Chellick do on many occasions. He searched her mouth, enjoying her subtle flavor; her tongue tangled with his, sending shivers of pleasure through him.

She lightly closed her teeth on his tongue, and for a moment he was alarmed, ready to use any means necessary to free himself. She sucked on it and he shuddered, giving a rumbling purr as she sucked harder. His hands gripped hers harder as another shiver passed through him. He panted as she let his tongue go. Her eyes smiled up at him as he stayed very still, trying to fight the urge to roughen this experience up a bit.

His eyes roved over her body, wondering if the rest of her tasted like her mouth. He shifted, licking her skin until he reached her milk glands. He was about to bypass those, but her moan of frustration alerted him. Hesitantly he licked the protruding flesh and she moaned, thrusting her chest out further. He repeated the process on the other one, and a shiver rippled across her skin, another moan escaping her.

He glanced up at her; her eyes had darkened as she watched him, waiting to see what he was planning. He moved further down her body, licking and nipping, feeling her gasp or squirm. He stopped at the juncture of her thighs, unsure if he should proceed.

"If you are going to go there, you need to take one of these pills, just in case," she said, her voice husky as she motioned toward the bedside table. He opened the drawer, taking out a case of pills marked ‘Turians’. They were small, blue in color; he read the label that explained they were taken in case of allergic reactions. He took one, feeling it melt in his mouth quickly. He passed her the package and watched as she took one.

He glanced at her quickly, then returned his eyes to the place she had mentioned. He wasn't sure what to do. He lightly brushed his talon across her; this area was softer than the rest of her. A musky scent that went straight to his head came from within her. He purred loudly as he brushed against her again. This time she moaned, her hips arching for his touch. His talon slipped between her lips, his eyes widened and he swallowed nervously.

The musky scent was stronger now, and he moved his talon slowly as she groaned low in her throat. Her head was tossed back; eyes squeezed shut as she moved herself against his talon. He moved his other hand, placing it on her hips and holding her still. He had watched how she moved against his talon and tried to mimic it. She writhed, moaning as he found a flap of skin that was really sensitive, if he was to judge by the way she was reacting. The small button hardened, and the musky scent grew stronger. Her dark skin was flushed, sweat beading on her chest.

"Oh, God, please don't stop…" she gasped, trying to gyrate her hips. He leaned in closer, taking a deep breath of her scent, enjoying it as his own body tightened in reaction. Hesitantly, he flicked his tongue out, touching the hardened flesh. She cried out and he had to struggle to keep her hips still. He pressed harder with his tongue, flicking at the same time. Her breath sped up, and her muscles tightened in anticipation. He didn't stop; he continued his learning experience. She reached down, grasping onto his fringe, pulling him closer. He didn't need to be told twice. He moved his claw to the edge of her opening and her whole body spasmed. She arched off the bed, crying out loudly; at first he thought he had done something wrong, but her expression was one of pure pleasure.

She gazed down at him with a sated look, and a part of him was irritated that his first true experience
was cut so short. He knew they were done for the rest of the day. She pulled him up and he went willingly. He was about to move off to the side, but she slipped her long legs around his highly sensitive waist. He groaned, fighting not to thrust into her. She had already found her release and he was sure she wasn’t going to have another one; she was just being nice. He couldn’t take advantage of her like that, knowing this part wouldn’t be pleasant for her. She lifted her hips in invitation, but he didn’t take it. "What’s wrong?" she asked quietly, brushing a hand along his cheek, her finger lightly teasing his mandible.

"You've already found your release. This won't be pleasurable for you," Nihlus told her, looking directly in her eyes.

"Nihlus, humans can have multiple orgasms," she whispered against his mandible. His eyes widened and he thrust forward savagely, sheathing himself inside her fully. She moaned, her teeth latching onto his shoulder. He shuddered above her as her muscles clamped around him. He meant to take it easy, he even planned to; but the feel of her body was just too much. He treated her like he would another female Turian, holding nothing back. He shoved into her roughly over and over again, each thrust bringing her closer as she groaned or cried out. Her nails dug into his tough skin, and her legs clamped tightly around his waist, enflaming his passion. She bucked against him as he found his pleasure.

He rolled off to the side, looking at her in wonder. Now he understood why Chellick wanted more than a one night stand. If all humans were like her, Turian and human relations would definitely improve once this was known.

"Too bad we can't bask in the afterglow, but I was ordered to report to the Docking Bay at seven," she muttered with a heartfelt sigh. The clock showed that it was six thirty; only enough time for the both of them to grab a shower and head out. She moved quickly to the shower. It didn't take her long to have one, and he followed right after her. She was already dressed in her armor when he came out, waiting impatiently at the door for him.

The Normandy wasn't what either of them expected when they saw her docked. Shepard’s eyes widened, along with Nihlus'. "Impressive what humans and Turians can do while working together," she smirked, giving him a wink.

"Shepard?" a voice asked from behind her. A man with short black hair and a pack over his shoulder stood there, looking expectantly at the Commander.

"Kaidan? What are you doing here?" she asked in shock.

"Captain Anderson requested me, though I don't know why if you are on board, as well. He doesn't need this many high class biotics," he muttered.

"You're right, it is odd," she murmured thoughtfully as they boarded. Nihlus ignored the human as he stood beside Shepard. He watched Shepard inconspicuously, making sure no one noticed. His heart picked up speed as he thought of what had happened not long ago.

Kaidan watched the Turian, wondering why he was on board. As far as he knew, there were to be only humans on board. He had no problems with aliens, but he thought it odd that a Turian was here. Kaidan assumed he was probably here because it was a joint effort. That was what he thought until he noticed the covert glance that the Turian gave Shepard. He was shocked seeing this; he wasn't sure if he should warn Shepard at some point or keep it to himself, in case he was reading more into it than was there.

The decontamination finished and they boarded the ship. Nihlus took everything in before stepping further onto the ship. Glancing around, he spotted Captain Anderson speaking with a young human soldier. Shepard looked around, impressed with the scene before her. She had never been on a ship this advanced; even the one she grew up on hadn't been this advanced.

"Well, Spectre, we might as well find out where the crew quarters are so we can unload," Shepard muttered. Kaidan stared at the Turian in front of him, his eyes widening momentarily when he heard his title. So why was there a Spectre on board? he wondered curiously.

The Captain moved toward Shepard and Nihlus, wondering how he was going to pull off the plan he and Udina had concocted. Having Shepard and Nihlus share a room was the obvious way and that
was what he was going to do; but he had a backup plan in case Nihlus didn't like the arrangement. He didn't want to place a strain on the tenuous idea of a human becoming a Spectre. He had to play this smoothly. If he could have them both sharing a room, then he was positive that Shepard would be able to seduce the Turian.

"If the two of you will follow me, I'll show you where you will be sleeping," he commanded, leading the way toward some stairs. "This is the Mess Hall, where meals will be served," he explained.

Anderson walked them through the Medical Bay, toward another set of doors. "I have arranged it so the both of you will be staying here. If either of you is uncomfortable with that, I will sleep in the pods with the crew and one of you can take my quarters," he offered, holding his breath and waiting for their reactions.

Shepard was the first to move towards the bunk. She dropped her case onto the bottom bed. "I'm taking the bottom, you can take the top," she said with a challenging look. Nihlus smirked, tossing his stuff onto the top bunk. Anderson sighed in relief, exiting the room quickly so they could settle things on their own.

"Do you think they set this up?" Nihlus asked as he leaned against the bedframe near Shepard. "Who knows? They are probably hoping I would seduce you to help with Turian relations," she muttered. Actually, she didn't care if that was the case. Nihlus grinned, shaking his head. If only she knew the half of it, he thought. If this was Anderson and that human diplomat’s way of securing her chances of becoming a Spectre, then they were in for a surprise. He wouldn't let his personal life cloud his judgment.
Chapter 3

On the Normandy’s first mission, there wasn’t much to do; some repairs and clean up after a major storm hit a planet. The next assignment had been an evacuation; the planet hadn’t been as stable as they originally thought upon their arrival. From what Shepard understood, they found that mission quite by accident. A distress beacon alerted the Normandy to the problem. When she wasn’t on a planet doing missions, she was down in the cargo hold with Nihlus. He was trying to improve her hand-to-hand combat skills.

Shepard scowled up at the Nihlus when she landed on the metal floor for the umpteenth time. “You know, Nihlus, if I land on my back once more, I’m breaking all the rules and using my biotics,” she threatened him. He smirked, surprised that she hadn’t used them already. He hadn’t told her not to; he only asked that there be no permanent damage to his body.

“We’ll continue this tomorrow. Right now you need to eat,” he grumbled good naturedly. Prior to this experience, if someone had told him he would enjoy being in the presence of a human for long periods of time, he wouldn’t have believe them. Shepard was different; she was straight forward and honest, and she agreed that humanity wasn’t ready for the large leaps and bounds it wanted.

“Food sounds really good,” she smiled brightly, looking at him sheepishly as her stomach rumbled. The first few times he had heard the noise, it had unnerved him greatly; though he hid his reaction. Now it just made him nervous. He didn’t understand why her stomach would growl when her own voice couldn’t provide that sound. The sound her stomach made was deep and rumbling, reminding him of a warning, but the growl that a human emitted when they were frustrated was pathetic; not threatening at all.

They were heading to the elevator when the Captain’s voice stopped them. “Shepard, Spectre, we just received a distress signal. Batarians are raiding a nearby town. Grab your gear and be ready to disembark,” he ordered.

“Well, so much for eating,” Shepard grumbled as they both jogged to the elevator. It didn’t take them long to get changed. Shepard was still suiting up when Nihlus finished. He moved quickly over to a table that was covered in food, grabbing a few things and tucking them into a small pouch on his waist. He would give it to her when she started running low on energy.

Kaidan moved up beside her, already in his gear. He passed her a weapon, but she shook her head, reaching into her locker and pulling out the gun that Nihlus had bought for her when they were on the Citadel. “Are you ready?” Nihlus asked her, ignoring Kaidan.

She gave a brisk nod, leading the way to the airlock. “Commander, how do you want to do this?” Kaidan asked when they came upon the rest of the group.

“Do as I say, don’t second guess me and we should all be fine. The first one who tries to play hero and screws up my orders by putting everyone in jeopardy will learn why they call me Queen of the Bitches,” she stated coldly. Her green eyes carried a deadly look as she met each gaze, including Nihlus’. He was shocked that she included him in that threat.

“Shepard, we are dropping you right in the middle of the firefight; be ready,” Anderson commanded. Everyone stepped back; including Nihlus, as a grin that made peoples’ skin crawl spread across her face. Some of her team gasped in fear. She glanced at them with burning bright blue eyes; her pupils changing into blue glowing pits.

“Play time, boys,” she laughed eerily as her biotics swept over her body like a blue flame. One of the younger recruits looked on, his mouth hanging open. He turned his attention to Kaidan, looking at him expectantly. “What about you, lieutenant? Aren’t you going to do the same thing?” he asked nervously.

“No, I can’t do that. Shepard has more experience with her biotics than I do, plus…” he trailed off as Shepard’s deadly gaze snapped to him.

“You were saying, Lt.?” she questioned with a deadly calm that made his tongue shrivel.
“Nothing, Commander,” he answered hastily. She held his gaze a few moments more, making sure he didn’t cross the line again.

The door before them opened. They weren’t right in the battle zone, but close enough that they could hear the firefight. People screamed in fear, and the team heard the haunting sounds of wailing children. Orders rang through the air, commanding most of the group to fall back.

“You two, right flank. Kaidan, you and your buddy go left. Nihlus and I will be going down the center!” she ordered, her voice sharp over the noise. “No one block me, if you want to live!” Nihlus and Shepard took off in a jog, and she released her biotics, using fire on those she could; lifting and slamming some back down to the ground or holding them in place. Those that were hidden, she elevated into the air for her team to shoot. It surprised her how well they listened; they didn’t stray too far from her in their flanking, but maintained enough distance to surround the Batarians. What was even more shocking was that the young ones wishing to fight actually made sure she was in the lead.

She spotted two barrels of fuel and hoped they were at least partially full. “Nihlus,” she called out to him. He glanced at her after taking out another Batarian, and she pointed to the barrel. The Turian nodded, readying his weapon.

She lifted the barrels, moving them to the center of the Batarian group. As soon as they hit the ground, Nihlus fired. Her squad was knocked back, stunned for a moment; most of their shields were battered from the blast. Her eyes widened, shocked at the size of the blast. It shouldn’t have been large enough to touch them.

Shepard sat up, her eyes widening even further. The twenty or so Batarians in the attack squad now lay dead; their former location transformed into a large, blackened area that smelled of burnt flesh. Slowly her squad rose to their feet, their eyes widening at the destruction. “The next time you ask me to shoot something, make sure what it is first,” Nihlus scowled at her.

“They were marked as fuel tanks,” she muttered, unsure what to make of this explosion.

“Then they shouldn’t have exploded like that,” Nihlus muttered.

“No shit! Now I really want to know what that was,” she hissed. She turned back to her team, a stern expression on her face. “I’m heading into town. Search this area for bodies and then find me there,” she ordered.

She and Nihlus walked into the small village that was just up the hill. They didn’t bother looking to see if Shepard’s orders were being followed; they both knew the team would do as they were told. At first glance the village appeared deserted; but within a few minutes, people began leaving their houses. Some looking uncertain, others still scared; but there were a few that were filled with curiosity.

“How many were taken?” Shepard asked. She glanced over to what remained of the militia for the town. Ten still stood on their own, while most lay injured or dying.

“No one was taken, though there are quite a few dead,” one man answered quietly when no one else would.

“Is there a doctor here?” she asked him, since he seemed to be the only one willing to answer questions.

“No, he is one of the ones that died, Commander,” he said sadly, his eyes dropping to the ground and his shoulders slumping.

She opened her communicator. “Captain, we have injured down here. They need medical attention, and their doctor is dead,” she explained quickly.

“Dr. Chakwas will be on scene shortly. Joker is landing the Normandy nearby,” he told her before ending the transmission.

“What were in those fuel cans?” Nihlus asked him.

“Uh…um…it wasn’t fuel,” he trailed off, his voice stuttering under Nihlus’ intense gaze.

“If it wasn’t fuel, then what was it?” Shepard asked coldly.

“I’m not sure. We had a scientist here for a while; he found something that would be better than the fuel we use, so we allowed him to replace our stores,” he answered sullenly.

“Where is this scientist now?” Nihlus asked.
“He said he was going to the Citadel,” the man answered nervously.
“Is there anything else we should know about? Anything that could put this colony or our people at risk?” Shepard asked coldly.
“N-n-no, I-I d-d-on’t think so,” he stuttered anxiously, his feet shuffling in the dirt. The lie was written all over his face.
“What are you hiding?” Shepard asked, raising her glowing, blue hands menacingly. The colonist shrank back, his eyes widening as a whimper left his mouth. Shepard took another threatening step toward him, preparing to follow through on the unsaid threat before she was interrupted.
“Andrew, one of the containment seals is broken!” a woman ran out of a building, yelling hysterically.
“What was in the containers?” Nihlus asked her sharply.
“I don’t know, it just has a warning symbol on it,” she answered, a touch calmer now.
“You have dangerous chemicals in the center of your town and you don’t know what their names are or what they do?” Shepard asked incredulously.
“Nihlus, look after things here. Make sure Dr. Chakwas has everything she needs,” Shepard ordered. The Spectre looked amused that he was being given an order. However, he realized the logic in it; Shepard had more experience with chemical compounds and she was the best choice to evaluate the danger of a possible leak.
She followed the woman back from where she had come; entering cautiously, not sure what she would encounter inside. She felt relatively safe with her armor and mask on. She rounded the corner, her eyes widening as she saw the easily recognizable liquid on the ground. She knew it was too late; she had been exposed to it, and she could already feel the effects on her mind. Shepard’s brain felt fuzzy, and her body felt like it was floating as she stood in the room. “Nihlus, evacuate the colony. We have an eezo leak,” she ordered, her voice breathless. She knew she had to get away immediately. She was more susceptible than most people, since she had already received many doses of the dangerous chemical.
“Shepard, get out of there! It’s too dangerous for you. You can’t be exposed to eezo again!” Kaidan’s voice rang loud and clear over the comm. It snapped Shepard out of her mental fog. She moved as quickly as she could to the door.
As soon as she hit fresh air, she ripped her helmet off and took gulping breaths; fighting the overwhelming need to pass out. She could feel herself sway in place; her world slowly going dark before her biotic energy erupted around her.
~oooooo~
“Doctor, what’s her prognosis?” Captain Anderson asked as he, Nihlus, Chakwas and Alenko stood around the bed. Shepard lay before them on the bed, pale and clammy; her biotics flaring mildly every few minutes.
“Initially, she would have received a very small dose. That wouldn’t have been a problem, but when she passed out and lost control of her biotics, it gave her a much larger dose. We are lucky that the colony had already been evacuated and the others had been moved far away from the contaminants,” she answered, looking at Nihlus.
As soon as Shepard walked toward the storage shed, Nihlus had begun evacuating the villagers. It hadn’t taken long; most of the people were standing around, ready to go. He watched Shepard leave the building through his scope and knew there was something very wrong. They had two people tell them it couldn’t be anything serious; the Alliance had asked them to store the chemical for them. They wouldn’t do anything to harm the colonists, would they? That was a load of shit if he ever heard it.
“What can be done for her?” Anderson asked.
“She needs rest. She will be fine eventually, but she will need to eat more,” Chakwas answered.
“Also, her biotics will be out of control until she learns how to contain them. It took her a few weeks to learn how to control them the last time she was exposed to eezo,” Alenko added, looking down at the woman on the table. He couldn’t believe she was alive; after an accident of this magnitude, she should be dead. He had never heard of another human living through four different exposures to
eezo. Yet if anyone could survive it, he knew Shepard would be the one. He was familiar with the Commander, as he went to school with her for a short time. In school, she had been blunt and to the point, never backing down to anyone. She followed orders until she was told to do something she found morally incorrect; then she would take things into her own hands. Each time she did something like that, people took notice. She never made a large scene, but the way she expressed her displeasure always made people stop and think. Not long into her military training, she was sent on her first mission. After that, Kaidan heard many tales about her. If all the rumors were true, he wasn’t sure whether to be scared of her, or admire her. Sure she was a hero; having saved countless lives on one of her missions. He didn’t know all the details. Only the top brass had that knowledge. But there had been stories about her tendency to shoot first and ask questions later.

“Alenko, what else do you know about being exposed to eezo?” the Captain asked.

“Not much. I was offered additional doses early in my career, but I turned it down. All I’ve heard is that she is the first human to survive several counts of exposure,” he shrugged. “Though I would suggest providing her with ample food as soon as she wakes up. Also, you might want to stop at a planet where she can use her biotics until she drains herself,” Kaidan muttered.

“We don’t have time to make special stops. Is there any other way to drain her?” Anderson asked. Kaidan started blushing and wouldn’t meet anyone else’s gaze.

“Fighting might work, but that is only temporary,” he grumbled.

“Any other ways you can think of?” the Captain asked with a penetrating gaze.

“I would prefer that the Commander explain it to you, sir,” he stated. Anderson looked at him for a few more moments before dropping his eyes to the ground. Nihlus watched the exchange silently, as he knew what the lieutenant wasn’t saying.

Anderson turned his attention back to Shepard as she lay there. He wondered what effect the eezo would have on her. She was already known as a powerful biotic, but another dose could be scary if reports of what happened on the planet were true. The younger staff that went on the mission with her to fight had been awed by her talents; therefore, he had been unable to get a true story out of them. They made her sound like a god. Alenko’s report sounded more accurate; she used her biotics constantly for the benefit of the team.

“Call me when she wakes,” Anderson ordered when everyone left the room.

Shepard sat at a table eating. She was still chafing over the reprimand that she had received. Nihlus sat across from her, watching her so intently that it was unnerving. “Nihlus, ask whatever is on your mind,” she grumbled.

“How much affect did the eezo have on you?” he asked her, watching every move carefully for telltale signs that she was lying.

“Not much, that I can tell. I seem to be more aware of the mass effect field around me,” she shrugged.

“How so?” Nihlus asked, his curiosity piqued.

“Before I could feel it, and when I used my biotics, I could see it, sort of. It was more of a color. Now I’m more aware of it,” she answered, uncertain how to explain. How do you explain to someone that every living being has a color that shrouds them? That color shifts as their mood changes, or if they have biotic abilities. It barely made sense to her, so educating others was nearly impossible. She told the doctor and Chakwas didn’t seem worried about it; neither was the Captain. She glanced around the empty Mess Hall. It was late and only the night crew was left. “So, why aren’t you sleeping yet?” she asked him.

He didn’t answer her; instead, he gave her a penetrating gaze that sent a shiver down her spine. She swallowed thickly as she felt her body heat begin to rise. A smug look crossed his face as he watched her, and she hastily looked down at her plate, in case there was someone watching. Her plate was empty and she didn’t remember finishing it. “I’m heading to bed,” she stated, placing her plate on the counter for it to be cleaned in the morning.

The door closed behind them, shutting them away from the crew. She was about to undress, but
clawed hands shoved her against the bed. Hot breath caressed her neck as Nihlus’ hands traveled along her body. Every night since they had boarded, they had been together; if they weren’t completely exhausted. Usually he started off gentle, only losing control when he was sheathed inside of her. This time, all gentleness was gone; the metal bars on the bed were pressed hard against her body. She had to stop him from ripping her shirt off of her. He growled in warning; she moaned at the sound, sending her pulse racing beneath him.

He leaned forward, clamping his teeth on the back of her neck, trying not to break skin. He held both of her hands tightly in one of his, while the other explored her nether regions. She was already wet and ready, and he purred against her skin.

Without warning he plunged himself into her, and she cried out in pleasure and pain. At the moment, he couldn’t be gentle even if he wanted to be. Seeing her near death for those few moments before they got her aboard the Normandy had hit him harder than he expected.

She lay in the Medbay for hours, looking pale and fragile. He couldn’t believe how much that affected him; he had come to care for this human and he didn’t know how it happened. It wasn’t supposed to be this way. Their relationship was to be for pleasure and nothing more; the same as the one Shepard shared with Chellick. The thought of her and Chellick together again while he was around sent his blood boiling in his veins.

He thrust into her soft body rougher, trying to erase that picture. Her muscles clamped around him as she found her release, nearly bringing him to his own. He fought to maintain control; he didn’t want this done so soon. He slowly removed himself from her warm depths and placed her onto her hands and knees on the floor.

He mounted her, desperate to feel that she was alive. Her lithe body arched beneath him, so different from a Turian female. Nihlus changed his tactics now that the edge of his urgency was gone. He still clamped her teeth on her neck as gently as possible.

He could feel himself coming close and knew that she was, as well. Their joined moans filled the room. Shepard cried out as she found her release once more. Her muscles clamped around him; his body surging forward as his release shot through him, his roar of pleasure echoing off the room.

Outside of the door in the Medbay, Dr. Chakwas’ head snapped up when she heard Nihlus’ animalistic roar. A shiver of fear swept through her as she stared at the door, her face pale. She was scared for Shepard and wondered what had happened to upset the Turian so much.

Following procedure, she paged the Captain to come to the Medbay. It didn’t take long; he was there in a few moments. “What is it, doctor?” he asked.

“I think there might be a problem in the Spectre’s and Commander’s room. I heard the Turian yell, obviously upset about something,” she said, glaring at the door.

Anderson was about to find out what was going on, when an idea occurred to him. Instead of going to the door, he led the doctor away so the room’s occupants could have some privacy. “Doctor, why don’t you go to bed and leave the paperwork until tomorrow,” he ordered.

Back in the room, Shepard heard the Captain’s voice through the door, and she smiled as she heard what they were talking about. Her smile turned into a chuckle as Nihlus glared at her. “You’re lucky we didn’t get caught,” she snickered at the glowering Turian.

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She closed her eyes, drifting off to sleep, wondering what tomorrow would bring. A sense of unease slipped over her, snapping her eyes wide open. Whatever the next day would bring, she had a terrible feeling it wouldn’t be good for any of them.
Chapter 4

Shepard walked into the cockpit, stopping behind the pilot’s chair where Jeff ‘Joker’ Moreau resided. She knew of his reputation as a first-rate pilot, but hadn’t bothered talking to him yet. Kaidan sat in the copilot’s seat, scanning information on the panels before him; something she would never be able to understand. Nihlus was already there, watching out the window as the planet came closer into view.

Upon reaching Eden Prime, they had received a distress call. There had been panic and firefighting, and she was worried what they would find when they landed. Fighting the Batarians a while back had been one thing, but this was an entirely different situation. The gut feeling she’d been having recently had been screaming at her since they intercepted the transmission. She shared her unease about this mission with Nihlus; thankfully, he took her concerns seriously, but there was nothing he could do.

Nihlus glanced at her as she stood beside him; both of them dressed in their armor, ready to depart. “Alenko, are you ready?” Shepard asked as the biotic shut down his terminal. “Ready and able, sir!” he stated, rising from his seat. “I’ll meet you down in the Cargo Hold.” She watched him walk away for a moment before turning to the Turian.

“Are we doing this as a group?” she asked him. After finding out that he was evaluating her as a candidate for becoming a Spectre, she wasn’t sure what the procedures would be once they touched down.

“No, I’m going solo,” Nihlus stated, leaving the cockpit and heading for the Cargo Hold. Shepard followed behind him, worried that he would be travelling alone. She understood his reasons; it was the way of a Spectre. They weren’t used to counting on others to have their backs, and many preferred working alone.

Nihlus checked his guns, Shepard’s warning in his mind. If she said she had a bad feeling, it was wise to listen; you didn’t shrug it off. She’d been right too many times. He didn’t like this, either. There was something wrong about Eden Prime, but he couldn’t quite figure out what it was.

The ship they had seen on the view screen worried him; he had never seen anything like it before. As soon as he had a few moments after the mission, he would be contacting the Council; notifying them of the ship and that he believed Shepard should become a Spectre.

The ground team stood in the airlock, waiting for permission to disembark; Nihlus would be dropped off first, then Shepard’s team would follow. He wasn’t impressed with her team, however. She was working with Lt. Kaidan Alenko; he was a powerful biotic, but he didn’t appear to be a hardened soldier yet. There was also a younger human, inexperience written all over him. Shepard had her work cut out for her; and if they pissed her off enough, he would have quite the job ahead of him later in the evening. He grinned at the image that flashed through his mind. He couldn’t wait.

Nihlus exited the ship first. He moved through the trees silently, always on alert; his eyes piercing through the foliage. He stopped when he noticed movement around him. It wasn’t the colonists; these things were machines. More specifically, they were the Geth, a race of sentient machines created by the Quarians long ago to be used as servants. The slaves had overthrown their creators, and in the resulting war, the Quarians had lost their home planet, and now travelled the galaxy in a fleet of ships. The Geth hadn’t been seen outside of the Perseus Veil for hundreds of years, however. It didn’t make sense. The Council needed to know about this.

He would send this information with his final report of Shepard’s evaluation. He’d spoken to the Council a few times during this mission, giving them information about Shepard and her abilities; suggesting she be allowed to become a Spectre. The Turian Councilor didn’t believe humanity was ready for this big of a step, and Nihlus tended to agreed that most humans weren’t. Shepard was different, however; she was more than ready. He told them exactly that, and was shocked when the Turian Councilor nodded his head in agreement.

Two shots, two Geth down. Simple so far, but he didn’t think the rest of this mission would be this
easy. He ran a scan over the machine, collecting as much intelligence as he could. They were going
to need it if the Geth were back.
He stored it with everything else he’d scanned since boarding the Normandy. Every message, and all
his data on Shepard and her performance were stored on his omnitool. He didn’t trust the computers
on the Normandy, and some of the information was too sensitive to risk anyone else viewing it.
He moved further, radioing periodic updates to Shepard. The last one had been a little bit ago.
“Nihlus, are you coming up against Geth, too?” she asked. She sounded more annoyed than
concerned. He didn’t blame her; this mission hadn’t gone the way he wanted.
“Yes, quite a few,” he stated, about to close his link. “What is your status?” he added quickly. A
nagging feeling in the back of his mind told him that this was an important question.
“We lost Corporal Jenkins. Two disruptors blew right through his shields; he didn’t have a chance,”
Shepard told him. He could hear the remorse in her voice for a moment before she collected herself.
“I’ll meet you at the dig site,” Nihlus told her, ending the communication.
Shepard moved forward, keeping an eye out for more enemies. She felt a shiver run up her spine and
focused ahead, sensing nearby danger. She could just make them out; three more Recon Drones flew
down the path. Damn, where the hell did those things come from? she wondered irritably.
“Alenko, there are three more drones down the path. I want you to stick close to the trees and keep
your head down as you move!” Shepard ordered, pointing to a copse of large trees standing nearby.
“What about you? You won’t have cover,” Alenko protested.
“Don’t worry about me; just do as I command,” she snapped coldly, taking the lead down the path.
The drones spotted her right away. She let her biotic shields flare to life. She was shocked that they
were able to drain her shields so fast. She forced more energy into the shields, sighing with relief that
it held as another onslaught hit her.
Kaidan peeked around the tree, shooting at the drone. He successfully killed one, but there were still
two left. Shepard shook her head; this would be so much easier if I had tech abilities, she thought to
herself. She used her gun on the last two, and was surprised that it only took a few shots to bring
them down. She had been expecting more of a fight.
“Where do you think those came from?” Alenko asked, looking concerned.
“I don’t know, but I plan on finding out,” Shepard scowled, taking the lead as they moved quickly
toward where the beacon was supposedly located.
“Do you hear that, Commander? It sounds like gun fire,” Alenko said and looked at her worriedly.
She shared his concern; quickly they moved down the path, keeping watch for any remaining
enemies.
What they came upon made them hesitate for a split second. In the distance, a group of drones
chased a lone Alliance soldier into an open field. The soldier ran quickly, diving to the ground and
spinning around, firing at her pursuers. Shepard caught Alenko’s eyes, motioning for him to take a
flanking position. He gave a brief nod before following her unspoken orders; she moved up silently,
trying to get the best position against the enemy.
Alenko was the first to shoot, and the unknown female soldier ahead of them came out of hiding,
finishing off the final foe. Shepard moved quickly toward her, eyes watchful for more attacks. “Are
you harmed?” Shepard asked crisply.
“A few minor scrapes and bruises,” she answered.
“Who are you?” Shepard asked, glancing at Alenko as he moved up beside her.
“Ashley Williams of the 212th, sir!” she answered. Shepard didn’t have to ask what happen with the
rest her squad; it was obvious that she was the only survivor. This mission was growing worse by the
second.
“Nihlus, we found a surviving soldier,” she told him over the comm.
“I hear you, Shepard. All I’ve come across so far are dead bodies,” he answered. This whole mission
wasn’t sitting well with him. He knew Shepard had been correct in her earlier concerns regarding
Eden Prime. He spotted a spaceport ahead, and it looked suspiciously empty. “I’m heading to the
spaceport. I’ll meet you there,” he told her.
He moved stealthily and stopped as a cold sweat ran down his spine. Someone was moving around
below him, and the form was familiar. He took cover near some crates, glancing around them. Shock
coursed through his body as he recognized the figure.
“Saren, what are you doing here?” he asked, his tension easing as he approached his mentor.
The other Turian turned toward him, and surprise flashed in his eyes for a moment. Nihlus felt a
sense of foreboding, but couldn’t explain why. Slowly he approached his fellow Spectre, lowering
his weapon to his side.…. 

Shepard and her team headed for the spaceport, where they would reunite with Nihlus. They had
located some survivors, picked up some new weaponry and received some information on a
smuggling ring, providing the petty criminal was still alive. Shepard wasn’t holding out much hope
on that particular front.
She searched the area from where she was standing; she could see more Geth, but no sign of Nihlus.
She knew something was very wrong; worry and fear slithered down her back. She wanted to race
over to search for the missing Spectre, but knew that would be a potential death sentence.
“Commander, would you look at that?” Kaidan murmured, his voice filled with awe as he looked up
at the sky. The enormous ship they had seen in the video on board the Normandy rose before them.
What the hell is that? Shepard thought warily. She had never seen a ship like it before. They glanced
at each other for a moment, letting their uncertainty show.
“Anyone get that on video?” Shepard asked, furious at herself for not having gotten some footage of
her own. That would be something the Council would be interested in; a spacecraft that wasn’t
common knowledge flying around unchecked.
“I recorded some of it, Commander,” Alenko said, and Shepard turned to him, grinning.
“Good, don’t lose it,” she ordered. “That information could come in handy. Nihlus will want a copy
for the Council, as well.” They both looked at her questioningly, but she ignored them. Alenko
shouldn’t have been surprised at all, knowing the close contact the Spectre kept to the Councilors.
Shepard gave Ashley orders to lead; since she was the soldier, she could handle the brunt of the
firefighting while the two biotics defended her. The battle went quicker than the Commander thought
it would, but that didn’t settle her inner voice at all. “All clear, Commander,” Alenko stated. Shepard
rolled her eyes; it was like he thought she was blind or something.

Shepard moved ahead of the party, walking carefully toward the spaceport. Almost immediately, she
saw an unmoving figure lying on the ground before her. She knew that body intimately; she didn’t
need anyone telling her that it was Nihlus. He lay in a pool of blood; anger and sorrow slithered inside of
her as she slowly walked over to him, taking off her helmet. She knelt down on the blood-covered
cement ground. There was a hole in the back of his head, still seeping blood. With shaking hands she
reached out, her fingers going to his throat; praying that she would find a pulse, anything to show
that he was still alive.

Her worst fears realized, she discovered that he was dead. She fought the tears that were about to
spill over; today she had lost a friend, someone that had been close to her. She didn’t love him, nor
did he love her; but she respected him, and cared for him.
“You know this Turian?” Ashley asked, disgust lacing her words. Anger rose in Shepard at her tone,
and the look on her face; she had no patience for bigots. Especially since several of her good friends
were aliens.

Alenko took a few steps back. “Oh shit,” he began as he watched the Commander rise from the
ground, moving lightening quick. In an instant, she had Ashley by the throat, pinned up against some

“Normandy, this is Commander Shepard,” she said through the open channel. She really didn’t want
to give this report.
“Yes, Shepard?” Captain Anderson answered.

“Nihlus is dead. We just came upon his body; he’s been shot in the back of the head in an open area,” she briefed. “I’ll update you as soon as we find out more, Captain.”

“Understood, Commander. I’ll be expecting a full report when you get on board. Anderson out,” he said quietly. Shepard closed her eyes for a moment, trying to regain her composure so she could work. She turned to Kaidan and Ashley, but swung around when she heard a noise behind them. Three guns took deadly aim toward the direction of the sound.

“I would suggest you show your face!” Shepard ordered, her voice turning cold and lethal, her gun trained on the containers. A dead calm came over her; she hoped this was Nihlus’ killer. She wished it fervently.

“Don’t shoot…” a panicked voice called out before a man stood up from behind the crates. He glanced at the body, shuddering before meeting the coldest eyes he had ever seen. He couldn’t tear his gaze away from those piercing green eyes; they seemed to see right through him, straight to his soul. The other two soldiers appeared deadly, but their eyes were nothing like hers. If he listened hard enough, he was positive he could hear shovels in the distance, digging his grave.

He stood there, shaking with fear. “Who are you?” she asked carefully. Her voice was soft and deadly; the words were nice enough, but the tone made him want to run. He didn’t want to stay here and answer her questions. He had seen her face when she knelt next to the Turian and knew the information he had would either kill him, or save him. He was hoping for the latter, but he wasn’t going to bet on it.

“Powell, ma’am,” he answered hastily.

“Do you know what happened here?” Shepard asked, nodding toward the fallen Turian. Powell shifted his gaze to the body for a split second before turning back to her.

“The other Turian killed him; called him by name. It seemed like they knew each other,” Powell answered hastily; he wanted to squeeze his eyes closed so he didn’t see the bullet that was most likely about to come.

“He, who?” she asked, and her voice sounded so much scarier now. It was calm, almost too calm. There was iciness to it; whoever killed that Turian had better not stop running. Powell would bet his life that when she got ahold of him, it would take days for him to die.

“He called him Saren….” the frightened man trailed off when her eyes widened and a hiss escaped her lips.

“Are you absolutely sure?” she asked, her voice changing tones, becoming almost soothing in nature. Though, after his experience with the soldier so far, he didn’t believe the change.

“Yeah, I’m sure that’s what he called him. It seemed like he knew him, and dropped his guard. Then that Saren shot him in the back,” Powell said in a rush.

“Yeah, he knew him alright. Saren was his mentor, a fellow Spectre,” she spat. Powell sighed in relief when she turned her focus to the two that stood beside her. “We need to….” she began, and then trailed off, turning back to him. Those cold eyes drilled right into his as she remembered the information she had received from Cole and the other survivors. “You’re the smuggler,” she said thoughtfully.

Powell closed his eyes for a brief moment, and the sound of the shovels digging his grave grew steadily louder. He thought about bullshitting, but her eyes said that such a move would be a very bad thing and he believed them. “Uh…yeah I am…” he whispered, and waited for the gun shot; or the beating that would end his life, but it never came. He glanced at the soldier hopefully.

“Do you have anything useful here?” she asked with a smile that made the initial fear disappear and true terror take its place. Powell thought those mechanical things were scary, and also that Saren guy, but they had nothing on this woman. His reaction was odd, even to him; she hadn’t harmed him in any way. It was those eyes and that smile that chilled him to the core.

“Uh… yeah, I think so,” he answered quickly. Reaching into the crates next to him, he handed her everything he had. There was no way he was going to cross her. The other two argued about something, and said something to him, but their comments didn’t matter. As long as their leader wasn’t pissed at him, he was happy.
“I think I am going to find somewhere to hide now,” Powell muttered, ready to run away, but the slow shake of her head stopped him in his tracks. She wasn’t going to allow him to go to safety? Oh man, I am so dead, he thought, panicking.

“No, you are going to watch this body. Leave it where it is, and you can hide nearby; but this body better not be taken,” she said quietly, and a mournful look entered her eyes. “We’ll be back to get him and our other fallen comrade.”

“I’ll find some people to collect the other body,” Powell said, a hopeful look on his face. He hoped this would show her that he was more than willing to help. Anything to get her away from him.

“You’ll find some survivors in that building,” she said, motioning toward a storage shed on the hill. Without another word, she walked off with her crew following behind her.

They defeated the Geth before them, receiving only mild injuries, and boarded the moving platform that would take them to the docking station. The trip played havoc on Shepard’s emotions; it gave her too much time to think. She couldn’t allow that right now, not in the middle of a mission. They left the platform and stopped cold. The Geth had placed several bombs in their path, hoping to stop them. “Kaidan, do you think you can defuse them?” she asked, casting a hopeful glance at him. He nodded and the team rushed forward.

They quickly developed a working pattern and fell into it neatly. Kaidan would defuse the bombs, while Ashley and Shepard would cover him, taking the brunt of the fire. “Scans of the area show that this is the last bomb, Commander,” Alenko stated, rising from the ground.

“Good. Ashley, you have the lead again,” Shepard ordered, following close behind her. There were only a few Geth left, and a couple of those creepy zombie-like creatures. Shepard hoped never to see those husks ever again.

“Wow, have you ever seen anything like that?” Alenko asked in wonder as he gazed at the Prothean Beacon. Shepard glanced to where he was looking; she was equally impressed by the structure.

“Normandy, this is Shepard. We have the beacon,” she reported.

“Good job, Commander. We’ve already picked up the bodies of Nihlus and Jenkins and we’ll be at your location in a few moments to extract you,” Captain Anderson stated. Shepard glanced at the beacon, her eyes widening as she saw Kaidan being pulled toward it by some type of energy. The colors she could see were amazing. Bright blue light enveloped the lieutenant, and she knew Ashley didn’t see it. Without thought, she shoved Ashley out of the way and tackled Kaidan, throwing him out the beam’s path. She didn’t have time to save herself, and she quickly found herself wrapped tightly in the energy beam.

The energy pulled her resisting body toward the beacon, her feet clearing the ground as she was lifted high into the air. Kaidan and Ashley looked on, horrified. Kaidan tried to race to her and help, but Ashley stopped him, knowing how dangerous such a move could be. All they could do is watch as their Commander’s face contorted in agony.

Silently Shepard screamed as horrific images were shoved into her brain. The scenes were too fragmented; there were too many images for her to process. Pain exploded in her head as blackness took over. Even in the complete darkness, the images were still there; still imprinted into her mind.

“How is she?” Anderson asked Dr. Chakwas.

“Physically she’ll recover, but I still can’t figure out why she passed out. According to the scans of her brain, she appears to be sleeping; yet she won’t wake up,” Dr. Chakwas stated, shaking her head confoundedly. All her years of medical training couldn’t explain this. It made no sense.

“Inform me when she wakes,” Captain Anderson ordered, leaving the Medbay.

She glanced up when her door opened once again. Alenko moved over to the bed, and worry etched his brow. “Do you think she will wake?” he asked.

The doctor wasn’t sure what to say. She knew she couldn’t give him specifics, but he seemed so worried about the Commander. “We’ll know more in a few hours,” she answered him, hoping it was true.

“Captain Anderson set course to the Citadel, to deliver Nihlus’ and Jenkins’ bodies,” Kaidan mentioned as he stood at the end of the Commander’s bed. The doctor looked at him oddly, not sure
why he was sharing this with her. She stopped what she was doing to take a better look at the exhausted biotic. He was obviously weary and worry lines marred his face. Suddenly it dawned on her what the problem was; the lieutenant was fighting guilt. He felt guilty because of what happened to Commander Shepard.

“Lieutenant, why don’t you go and rest. I’ll inform you when the Commander wakes,” the doctor said gently.

The hours passed slowly, but Chakwas was able to get more paper work done without Alenko being in the room. Shepard’s brain waves were improving, finally leveling out. She hoped that it was a sign that she would be waking soon.

She had just finished her last report when the doors of the Medical Bay opened. Chakwas glanced over her shoulder to see Kaidan standing silently by Shepard’s bed. This time she decided to leave him; he needed to be here when she woke and hopefully it would ease some of his guilt.

The blackness that clouded Shepard’s brain with intense pain receded, allowing light in through her eyelids. She moaned at the intensity of the light as she cracked open her eyes. Slowly she glanced around the blurry room, not yet able to focus.

“Doctor Chakwas, I think she is waking up,” a familiar voice said above her.

Shepard’s vision slowly cleared, and she was able to focus on the doctor when she came into view.

“How do you feel?” Chakwas asked.

“Like I just drank a whole bottle of J.D. by myself,” Shepard grumbled, slowly sitting up. The room spun for a moment, and she held absolutely still until things came back into focus. “So what’s the verdict, doc?” she asked the older lady.

“Physically, you’re fine; but I did get some unusual readings. It was as if you were dreaming,” she murmured.

“Hmm, that makes sense, but it wasn’t a dream. It was the same flash of images that I received from the beacon. Jumbled pictures of destruction and death, but none of them made sense at the time. They still don’t,” she said quietly.

“I’ll have to add that to my report,” Chakwas said thoughtfully.

Shepard glanced over at Kaidan; she sat there, waiting for him to speak. At the moment she wasn’t too happy with him; he should have known better than to get near that damned beacon. But considering the situation, if it hadn’t been him, it would have been someone else. So she couldn’t really be mad at him.

“I, uh, just wanted to apologize for what occurred down there. This wouldn’t have happened if I had stayed away from the beacon,” he muttered.

“Kaidan, don’t worry about it. You had no way of knowing,” Shepard said before hopping off the bed. Her eyes narrowed as his mouth curved into a smile. Oh, he better not get any ideas, she thought disgustedly.

“Good, Shepard, you’re awake,” Captain Anderson stated as he walked into the room. “How are you feeling?” he asked, concern evident in his voice.

“Fine, sir, just a mild headache,” she answered as she leaned back against the hospital bed.

“I would like to speak with Shepard alone,” Anderson said, gazing pointedly at Chakwas and Alenko. He waited until they filed out and then turned his attention back to Shepard. He wasn’t sure how to begin the conversation; he knew she and Nihlus had been lovers and wasn’t sure how she would react to the reminder of his death. “I’m going to be honest with you, Shepard, this doesn’t look good. The beacon is destroyed, and Nihlus is dead.” He shook his head in frustration, waiting for the explosion that he thought would come.

“You don’t need to tell me that, sir. I already know how bad this looks. You’ve read my report, and you saw the video of the ship that was on the planet. None of us could have expected Geth. Nihlus was just as shocked as I was,” she stated brusquely.

“We’re heading to the Citadel right now. I’ve already contacted Udina about this; we are hoping to be able to see the Council,” he murmured. He stared at her thoughtfully; wondering, not for the first time, if it would be better to send Shepard to meet the Council without his or Udina’s interference. She seemed to understand the aliens better than they did.
“What are you thinking, Captain?” she asked, watching him like a hawk. He met that gaze head on, his face unreadable, or so he thought; but Shepard had a knack of seeing what was beneath the surface.

“Nothing important,” he lied, and though she didn’t call him on it, he knew she had caught him. Slowly she nodded her head, the knowing look in her eyes telling him she didn’t believe him at all. A thought occurred to him as he watched her. “Since your exposure to the eezo on your previous mission, have there been any side effects?” he asked curiously. He wondered if humanity now had the ultimate biotic among them.

“You’re wondering if it made me more powerful? No, it didn’t,” she stated. “But I see things differently now. I can see the dark energy that surrounds us, and I can see Mass Effect fields when they are in use. I have an easier time using my biotics now; I don’t have to fight to control it anymore. It’s almost as if I downgraded, but that’s not the actual case. My abilities are just as powerful as they used to be,” she shrugged casually. He watched her with interest, still trying to figure out half the stuff she said. He was a soldier, not a biotic.

“Go up and see Joker. We should be at the Citadel soon,” he ordered.

“Should I collect Nihlus’ possessions from my room?” she asked quietly.

“You can get to that later,” he answered before leaving the room.

“Shit there, staring at the bed, not sure what to do next. She missed the Turian, but it wasn’t the overwhelming pain that came with the loss of a loved one. She took a deep breath, needing to focus her thought on things that had to be done now; instead of dwelling on what she couldn’t change. The deep breath helped somewhat; but only time, and maybe a few stiff drinks, would help the rest. She left the Medical Bay, and didn’t bother talking to Kaidan or Ashley. She didn’t want to give Kaidan the wrong impression about their relationship and after the way Ashley spoke about Turians on the planet, she really didn’t want to talk to her. She headed up to the cockpit; the Citadel loomed ahead of them, along with numerous other ships. She recognized one in particular; the Destiny Ascension, a large vessel that she knew housed the Council. The firepower that ship has must be amazing, she thought with a smirk. She gazed in wonder, hoping that the members would be willing to listen to her account of the massacre on Eden Prime.
Chapter 5

The Normandy docked at the Citadel, and everyone was excited to receive some shore leave. Anderson stood beside Shepard as the crew left; leaving only the ground crew from Eden Prime onboard. Kaidan and Ashley continued their duties as the Captain and Shepard stood in the CIC until the deck was cleared.

“You know that what happened to Nihlus wasn’t your fault,” Anderson stated firmly.

“I know, Captain, but that doesn’t make it any easier,” Shepard bit out, glaring at him. “So, what are our chances of seeing the Council?” she added, annoyance filling her voice. The entire mission had gone to hell. Nihlus was dead, and Saren had very likely turned rogue; then there was the fact a colony had been practically wiped out. Oh, let’s not forget that the Geth had now returned from beyond the Perseus Veil. All-in-all, it was a total nightmare.

“Who knows, Shepard,” he sighed. “You should find the ground team and meet me in Udina’s office as soon as you can.”

“I’ll be there shortly. I need to make one stop first,” she told him as she thought of a Turian she hadn’t seen in awhile. A part of her had missed him during this trip, but with Nihlus there, Chellick hadn’t consumed her thoughts.

She headed for the lower deck, but stopped when Kaidan and Ashley stepped through the doors before her. “The two of you ready to go?” she asked, her ‘Commander’ face firmly set in place, and her tone hard, crisp.

“Yes, sir,” Ashley stated, moving at a brisk walk.

They left the barren ship, taking the elevator to C-Sec. “I need to see someone before we meet Anderson,” she told them, leading the way toward Chellick’s office. He was sitting behind his desk, going over paper work. His head snapped up when she entered.

He knew his eyes widened seeing her there. He hadn’t expected her to come to him; he thought he would have to hunt her down. She grinned as she saw him and turned toward Alenko and Williams, motioning for them to leave. She waited patiently as they walked away and the door closed behind them. “So, anything interesting happened since I left?” she asked with a smirk.

“No, nothing new here, but news of Nihlus’ death has made its way through the Citadel,” he muttered, coming around his desk to her. She stood there waiting, not sure if he would blame her for the Spectre’s death. He wrapped an arm around her waist, pulling her in close; she sighed, resting her head on his armored chest.

“What are you doing tonight?” she asked him softly.

“Well, I’m hoping you’re coming over to my place,” he answered with a chuckle.

“No, not your place; mine this time. Though I can’t meet you until later. I have to meet my Captain and hopefully the Council. This evening I should be available, but I’ll send you a message if I’m not,” she stated, leaning back in his arms so she could see his face. He leaned down, flicking his tongue out lightly against her lips. She opened her mouth, welcoming him in. They broke apart hastily when they heard the door open. She knew it was too late when she saw Ashley standing there, her mouth hanging open and her features curled into disgust. “Ashley, you were supposed to wait outside,” Shepard snapped coldly.

“Anderson wants us in Udina’s office now, ma’am,” she bit out, retreating quickly.

Shepard sighed and looked up at her Turian lover. He smirked, giving her a gentle push toward the door. Without another word she left to find Kaidan and Ashley in a heated discussion. They both shut up as soon as she saw them.

She didn’t bother saying a word to either of her companions as she made her way through C-Sec; some of the officers nodded or greeted her by name as they passed by. They walk into Udina’s office, moving to stand near the railing as he talked to the Council. Things didn’t sound good, not with the way Udina was handling the situation. They would be lucky if the Council even agreed to see them. Finally, she overheard that they would have their meeting in three
days’ time, after the Council launched an investigation of their own and reviewed the reports from Eden Prime.

“I see you brought your whole crew here,” Udina said snidely.

“No, just the ground crew,” Anderson responded irritably. Shepard ignored the noise of the Captain and Udina arguing. She thought about stepping in, but couldn’t be bothered; Udina was an idiot and he proved it every time he opened his mouth.

“You really screwed up our chance to get a human in the Spectres,” he bit out, his full attention on the Commander. He had thought it was a sure deal, especially with her reputation. Disappointment at her incompetence weighed heavily on the human society. She was supposed to be a hero, and yet a Spectre died while evaluating her. He knew it would be a far tougher fight now to get humanity a seat on the Council. He was lucky to have even gotten the meeting.

“There was nothing I could have done. Nihlus was nowhere near me when he died. One eyewitness said another Turian named Saren killed him. So don’t place the blame on me!” she snapped coldly, her eyes filled with a fire that made him hesitate for a moment. He knew she was not one to cross; her service records said as much. He also knew she wouldn’t stop until she located anyone that crossed her and from the looks of it, he had no doubt she would find Saren. Maybe things weren’t so bad… yet.

Shepard was silently seething as she glared at the ‘Ass of Humanity’. If she didn’t get out this office soon, she would not hold herself accountable for what she did to him. She waited patiently as he muttered some more nonsense. “Meet us at the Citadel Tower in three days,” he ordered.

With those parting words, the Captain and Udina exited the office, leaving Kaidan, Ashley and Shepard behind. “I suggest the two of you get some rest. Have your communicators on so either the Captain or myself can get ahold of you,” Shepard ordered them as she began to walk out the door. They followed behind her, and Ashley’s eyes widened as she took in the Citadel. It had been a long time since she had been here. Shepard ignored them the best she could, heading for the elevator that would take her to the ward where her apartment was located. Alenko and Williams stayed with her and she didn’t understand why. She turned to them in the elevator. “Why are you following me? You have the next two days off,” she asked exasperatedly.

Kaidan wouldn’t meet her eyes, and Ashley was focused on the scene outside of the elevator. “Shouldn’t we come up with some plan before we meet with the Council?” Kaidan asked cautiously. “Fine, but we are only discussing this for an hour or two,” she stated firmly, walking to her apartment door.

“Ma’am, what is this place?” Ashley asked.

“It’s where I live,” Shepard muttered, opening the door for them. She motioned for them to go ahead of her. Her place was almost as she left it, but the old armor she left in the corner wasn’t there anymore; it was sitting on its rack, cleaned. The clothes that had been on her couch from the night before she left were gone. Her eyes narrowed suspiciously as she sniffed the air. She couldn’t detect anything, but she moved slowly through each room with her gun in her hand. The other two followed suit. “Commander?” Kaidan questioned, wanting to know what his orders were. “Stay here,” she commanded, moving to her bedroom. The bedding had been changed and the clothes were gone from the floor. She moved to her dresser and found the missing clothes folded neatly, her jacket and sweater hung in her closet. On her bed laid a data pad with a message - We need to talk - Chellick. Damn! She hissed, ignoring the confused looks on her guests’ faces. “Well, it looks like we do have
something to drink,” she said sheepishly, showing them the jugs with a raised brow. Within moments they were sitting around the table, discussing strategic ways they could convince the Council to believe their story about Saren. None of them sounded plausible or feasible. There only way they could hope to succeed was to show them the evidence they had gathered and see what the Council had to say. From Chellick and Nihlus, she knew that the Council consisted of an Asari, Turian and a Salarian. The Asari and Salarian wouldn’t be a problem. The Turian Councilor was a different matter; he was known for his hatred of humanity. Both Nihlus and Chellick had warned her about that. However, if they could back up their claim with proof, then he might listen. It would have to be damned good proof, though. She knew this would be no easy task since she was accusing a well-respected Turian of Nihlus’ death.

She honestly thought the cause was hopeless; even she wouldn’t press charges with what they had. It wasn’t enough and the Council would surely say the same thing. She glanced at the two soldiers sitting at the table, and knew that when the verdict came down, they wouldn’t like it. She just hoped that they wouldn’t become vocal. She knew Udina would be doing enough of that for all of them.

“Commander, you don’t think we are going to win, do you?” Kaidan asked, breaking Shepard out of her reverie.

“No, even I wouldn’t make an arrest on what we have. We need more information and I don’t have a clue where to look,” Shepard muttered. “Anyway, I’m expecting company shortly, so we need to cut this short.”

She watched as they left, vaguely wondering what they were going to do for the night. Not long after they left, Chellick entered the apartment. He stopped at the door, taking in the sight of Shepard. He couldn’t believe that she had come to him when she docked. He knew she had been with Nihlus, and a part of him had been angered beyond words; though the rational part of his brain knew it should had been expected. They had never made any formal commitment to one other.

She looked worried about something, and that stress was taking its toll on her. Chellick thought about asking her what happened to Nihlus, but he knew she wouldn’t be able to answer. It was most assuredly confidential.

“I take it this mission didn’t go as planned?” he asked her quietly.

“That is a big understatement,” she scoffed, looking at him with an annoyed expression on her face. “Is there anything I can do to help?” Chellick asked, hating to see her under this kind of pressure.

“No unless you can get me a meeting with the Turian Councilor before the biggest human asshole alive opens his mouth and fucks every chance we have,” she muttered, running a frustrated hand through her hair. Chellick watched as she started pacing, her shoulders ramrod straight. She wasn’t giving up; she knew what Turians were like, and how to handle them without insulting them. That was the only reason Chellick was even considering the idea that suddenly came to him.

He knew it would be a very big risk, but it would be well worth it in the end. “Why don’t we talk with Executor Pallin?” Chellick suggested.

“Sure, but would Pallin be in his office right now?” she asked curiously.

“Probably, he’s there more than anywhere else,” Chellick answered her with a smirk.

“That man’s got to get a life,” she chuckled. “He’s almost worse than Nihlus was when it comes to working.”

“Very true, but he is a way to see the Council,” he reminded her.

“I know, but the last meeting we had didn’t go very well,” she grimaced. Chellick smirked as he remembered that particular meeting. She thought it hadn’t gone very well, when it was just the opposite. She and Pallin had been in agreement on almost everything.

“Don’t worry,” he smirked as he led her to an elevator.

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As predicted, Pallin was in his office looking over some papers, and his head snapped up when heard them enter. His eyes widened when he saw Shepard and Chellick standing there. He wasn’t sure what to make of this. His eyes remained on Shepard; she was the first human he had ever met that whose point of view he shared.

“What brings the both of you here?” Pallin asked, hoping it wasn’t something outrageous, like they
wanted to become mates. If that was the case, then there would be hell to pay. He could see Chellick cared for the woman, but Shepard didn’t seem to return those feelings. Human and Turian relations were frowned upon, even in the current climate of species cooperation. He wasn’t positive if there was a relationship between the two of them, but he was pretty sure there was, judging by the way Chellick watched her. He wasn’t sure what he thought of the whole thing. If it had been any other human, he would have been disgusted and reprimanded Chellick, probably demanding that he end it. Shepard wasn’t like other humans, however, so he decided to stay out of it.

“I need your help, if you’re willing to hear me out,” Shepard stated in a calm, even voice.

“I’m listening,” Pallin answered, trying to read her body language. He had a hard time doing that with humans, they were so confusing. All their emotions were on the surface for anyone to see, but they had so many that it became difficult to differentiate them. Shepard was harder than most to read; her body and face didn’t give away anything, much the same as a Turian.

“I want to see the Turian Councilor before Udina has a chance to say anything during the trial. If he speaks without someone talking with the Turian Councilor, then there is a good possibility that no one will listen,” she said, shrugging at the end. Pallin wasn’t sure what the shrug meant, but he let it go.

“What makes you think he will be willing to see you?” he asked her. This was no small favor she was asking, though he could understand her reasons for the request. Her human ambassador tended to overreact on many things, and he was forcing humanity to move faster than they should. The Turian Councilor knew this and tried everything in his power to stop it.

“He probably won’t be, and that is why I am coming to you for help,” she replied. There was no malice in her voice, no annoyance; only the weariness that showed clearly on her face.

He thought about her reasoning and agreed with her. “I’ll see what I can do,” he muttered. He wasn’t sure how he would pull this off, but he would try.

“Thank you, Executor,” she smiled, bowing her head respectfully. “We’ll let you get back to work.”

He watched her closely, envying Chellick. For a brief moment he wondered if Shepard was like the Asari he had known. He didn’t know much about humans. Most he had met were pushy and brash, with a complete lack of respect for others. The first time he met Shepard, he had assumed she was the same until she spoke.

This had been before she met Chellick, he was sure. She had just returned from a mission and he ran into her as she left Udina’s office. She approached each Ambassador in the Citadel embassy and talked with them for a few moments, asking questions about their culture. He listened patiently as she followed him to his own office, asking numerous questions about the Turians and their history. His first reaction was to ask her to leave, but he held himself in check. She was the first human he had encountered that took the time to talk with him without rancor.

He smirked as he thought of the few other times she stopped in, usually after talking with her Ambassador. On one such occasion, she had been so frustrated that she asked if he would consider replacing Udina. They both knew that was impossible, but he had been amused by the request. With a sigh he opened his communications console, calling up to the Turian Councilor’s office. An angry face appeared on the screen. “What can I do for you, Executor?” the Councilor asked coldly.

“I just spoke with Commander Shepard; she is requesting an audience with you. I think that you should speak with her,” Pallin stated, his voice quiet yet firm.

“Why would I wish to speak with this human?” the Councilor asked bitingly. It was well known that he didn’t like humans and thought they were gaining power too quickly.

“You might find the conversation interesting. She wishes to talk to you before the human Ambassador speaks at the hearing,” Pallin explained carefully. He wasn’t sure what to do to get the Councilor to agree. He didn’t want to push too far, either.

The Councilor’s countenance darkened at the mention of Udina, and a low growl escaped him. Pallin knew he may have asked too much. He was about to break the transmission, but thought better of it. “She shares your feelings regarding humanity, Councilor,” Pallin said, waiting for an outburst, but hoping that the new information would turn the tide in Shepard’s favor.

Silence met this declaration as the Councilor considered Pallin’s statement. “Tell her to meet me in
your office in two hours,” he stated coldly, ending the transmission abruptly. Pallin stared at the monitor, wondering if he had done the right thing. He just put his neck on the line for a human. One that interested him, it was true; but a human, nonetheless.

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The three Turians and the human stood quietly in the spacious office. The Turian Councilor sat in Pallin’s office chair behind his desk as it was the place of power. Shepard stood at attention in front of the desk, regarding the Councilor curiously. Chellick waited by the door, and Pallin looked on nervously as he stood beside the human female. Pallin and the Turian Councilor hadn’t spoken a word since she entered. The Executor had expected a reprimand, but none was forthcoming, at least at this point.

“Pallin, Chellick, leave!” The Turian Councilor ordered coldly, never taking his eyes off of the human in front of him. He saw Chellick hesitate for a moment. Interesting, he thought curiously. He’d heard the rumors of the C-Sec officer’s relationship with the human soldier and was slightly disgusted by them. Chellick met his eyes for a moment, and the warning shown clear in them. The Turian Councilor raised a brow ridge, wondering what was so special about this woman that had two Turians guarding her so carefully.

He waited until the doors closed, his eyes glaring coldly at her. “What do you want?” he asked abruptly. She stayed standing, her posture as confident as the look in her eyes. She met his gaze squarely, not backing down from his anger.

“I’m here to talk about Nihlus, your operative,” she replied bluntly.

“Yes he is. Killed by someone that he would let his guard down around; someone he would be comfortable turning his back on without fear or worry. I don’t believe he would have lowered his weapon for a stranger,” she stated succinctly. His eyes widened at her words; what she said had merit, but it wasn’t proof and they both knew it.

“You claim it was Saren,” the Councilor said pointedly.

“No, we were told by a shady dock worker that it was Saren. He said that was what Nihlus called him,” she muttered, staring at him. He was having trouble reading her expressions, but he was fairly sure this one showed annoyance.

“As you said, a ‘shady dock worker’ told you this. Why should we accept his account of events?” he asked, relaxing a bit. She wasn’t trying to pressure him into believing her; she was simply stating her case, though he didn’t know why she couldn’t wait for the trial as she should.

“How would he even know Saren’s name if he hadn’t heard it mentioned? It’s a human colony; Turians don’t usually make a habit of visiting our colonies,” she said pointedly. She did have a point, but she was forgetting something. Before he could say anything, however, she continued. “Also, he was too scared to lie properly. He was so scared that he reeked of it,” she spat disgustedly. He looked at her, trying to hide his shock. He knew humans didn’t have the sense of smell Turians had, but she knew he would understand her meaning.

The Turian Councilor looked at her thoughtfully. “You’re forgetting something. A Spectre’s missions take them all over the galaxy, and you said that this human was shady. There is a good chance that he could have had dealings with Saren before,” he stated. She didn’t try to refute or argue with him. Instead, she nodded her head thoughtfully.

“Saren is our top operative. I know he and Anderson have a history. Is that what this is all about?” he asked slyly, waiting for her to slip. She looked at him strangely and he was almost positive that the particular look was confusion.

“What are you talking about?” she asked slowly, her gaze thoughtful.

“That is not something for me to discuss,” he replied and gave her a warning growl. She watched him intently, not backing down from the fearsome noise. He was impressed, though he would never admit it.

“I know Saren is your best operative. I’d heard all about him from Nihlus. That is what I don’t understand,” she murmured. “Speaking hypothetically, if Saren did kill Nihlus, what would his
reasons be? The only possible explanation is that he has gone rogue.” Once again he guessed at her expression. This one appeared to be confusion. If he met more people like her, he would have to study humans and learn to understand these subtle changes in their faces.

“It doesn’t matter. ‘What ifs’ aren’t what we are looking for,” he reprimanded her, but her words worried him. What if she was right and Saren did kill Nihlus? he thought anxiously. There was no way he could allow those thoughts to consume him.

“I’m sorry for wasting your time. I can see that your mind is made up and nothing I say will change that,” she muttered and her eyes had gone cold. She gave a small bow of the head before turning away and walking toward the door.

He stopped her before she could open the door. “Why did you want to speak with me?” he asked, his own curiosity piqued about this woman. He had listened to the last message that Nihlus sent to the Council. He remembered everything that Nihlus told him on a private channel, when the two other Councilors weren’t listening in. Nihlus agreed that humanity, in general, wasn’t ready to become Spectres, but he said this woman was prepared for whatever the Council wanted from her. Nihlus told him that Shepard was different; she wasn’t like the others of her species. Now he knew what Nihlus had been talking about. She didn’t speak to him with disdain, or fear, and there was no disgust in her voice or her eyes when she looked at him. She met his gaze steadily, not flinching when he threw her words back at her. She kept a calm attitude, treating him with the respect that he had earned through combat and politics.

“Why did you wish to speak with me alone?” he asked her once again when there was no answer the first time.

She gave him a searching look. “Nihlus told me once that you would always be the hardest opponent of humanity because you hate our people. I wanted a chance to speak with you before Udina had his say and ruined whatever chance we had of winning the trial. We both know what Udina is like; I know that after he speaks, you won’t listen to anything else being said. So I wanted to lay out my case before you, showing you certain things that, while not proof, reveal that there was definitely something odd about his death,” she said, looking at him tiredly.

“So, this is to pressure me into making you a Spectre?” he asked. Most would try this tactic, and he didn’t expect her to be any different.

“No, I just want to find the killer of a good man; a man I respected. I already know my candidacy for Spectre is a no-go. Two people died on my watch, and one of them was a Spectre. On top of all that, the Prothean beacon was destroyed. I know there is no way now that I would be allowed to become a Spectre,” she said as if it were fact. She was right in a very small way; her chances would have been destroyed if the Council didn’t know the whole story - the information she had left out. Nihlus had been acting alone; Shepard didn’t have any chance to help him when he died. It had been one of her team members that had destroyed the beacon and she had saved his life.

He watched her for a few moments, about to utter words he never thought he would say to a human. “I’ll take your words into consideration, but what proof you currently have will not be enough,” he stated.

“Oh, I already know we are lacking good proof, but there is enough to raise questions,” she smiled. “Thank you for your time, Councilor.” She nodded quickly and left. He sat alone, not sure what to make of her.

She wasn’t what he expected, but he had heard rumors about her from other Turians. She was right, especially about what his reaction to her Ambassador would be. He didn’t like Udina; there was something about him that irked the Turian.

He glanced up when the doors opened and Pallin walked in. “So, what did you think?” Pallin asked. “Not what I expected. She isn’t like any human that I’ve met,” he answered him. He didn’t consider Pallin a close friend, but they were friendly enough when work wasn’t involved.

“I know, when I first met her I was ready to ask her to leave my office. Then we ended up talking for a while. So what are you going to do?” Pallin asked.

“There is nothing for me to do. Vakarian is looking after the investigation. In three days, we will have his full report. Our judgment will wait until then,” the Turian Councilor stated coldly.
“You already know Garrus won’t find anything; everything about Saren is confidential. Saren is a
bare-face, too; I don’t trust him,” Pallin stated disdainfully.
“He’s our best operative. The humans will need strong proof before I believe that he betrayed us,”
the Councilor snapped coldly, the thought of Saren betraying them was almost too much. However,
the Commander had made one important point that would probably be overlooked in the trial. Who
would Nihlus turn his back on comfortably, lowering his own gun? That thought worried him.
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Shepard and Chellick went back to her apartment, and Chellick watched her intently. He knew the
meeting hadn’t gone as she would have wanted. She glanced at him every now and then, worry
puckering her brow. “How bad was it?” he asked her.
“If this meeting changes anything, I will be surprised,” she grumbled before walking into her
apartment.
“Shepard, you can’t expect to change everyone’s mind about humanity. There are too many humans
that are like Udina,” Chellick told her, waiting for the explosion that would probably come.
“Oh I already know that. I’ve worked with some people like that. I’ll just have to wait and see what
happens. But right now, I’m going to stretch out and try to relax,” she sighed, leaning back against
the couch.
Chellick sat next to her, smirking as she leaned her head back and scowled up at the ceiling. He tried
to think of things that would help her calm down. One of the things that came to mind would no
doubt hurt him if he tried it…. he could take her to the bar…. 
Chapter 6

Shepard leaned back on the couch, her feet propped up on Chellick’s lap as he sat next to her. He ran his hand lightly up and down her leg, trying to relax her. She had been overcome with worry and stress ever since he arrived at her apartment. “What you need are a few stiff drinks. That may help you to think clearly,” he said, grinning at the thought of Shepard in a drunken state. It was the only time he saw her when the barriers that made her ‘Commander Shepard’ were down. It had been a while since he went drinking with her and he thought this would help her relax.

“Where would we go?” she asked him with an amused expression. She caught his hand in hers, idly running her finger along his talon. He smirked at her inquisitiveness; his talons always seemed to fascinate her.

“We could go to Chora’s Den. They sell half decent drinks,” he answered with a raised brow ridge. The music there wasn’t extremely loud and it would probably loosen her up some.

“Fine, but you’re buying the drinks,” she smirked, rising from the couch and grabbing her coat.

They walked to Chora’s Den leisurely, enjoying the time alone together. The Lower Wards were busy, and the shops were bustling with people. He stopped for a moment when he saw Garrus Vakarian questioning someone in the distance. He wasn’t sure about introducing Shepard to his fellow C-Sec officer. The thought of it actually set alarm bells ringing in his mind. Garrus was known as a good looking Turian; or so Chellick had been told by various Turian women.

“What is it?” Shepard asked, glancing around; trying to find what made Chellick stop so suddenly. Her gaze landed on a nearby Turian, and her eyes widened. Chellick watched her for a few moments, his hands balling into fists at his side as he saw her reaction. He wanted Garrus dead just from the look in her eyes. “Who is he?” she asked, glancing back at him.

“Garrus Vakarian. He’s a C-Sec agent that reports directly to Pallin,” Chellick muttered, scowling at the Turian. Shepard didn’t notice his anger; her focus entirely on the officer. Her gaze snapped back to Chellick when the name registered.

“That’s Garrus, the one that annoys you at the office?” she asked, chuckling. “The one that both you and Nihlus said you weren’t sure I would like?”

Chellick rolled his eyes; it was a human habit he had picked up from Shepard. Turians never made such facial expressions. “Anyway, let’s head to Chora’s Den,” he muttered, leading her toward the stairs. Unfortunately, that path would take them directly past Garrus.

Garrus stopped looking over the information in his hand, noticing Chellick as he neared. His gaze flicked to the woman walking beside him. His eyes widened as he recognized the human. This was the Commander Shepard he had heard so much about. “Chellick, Commander,” he said, nodding at the both of them.

“What are you doing working so late?” Chellick asked, inclining his head toward the data pad.

“I’m leading the investigation into Saren,” Garrus bit out angrily. He hadn’t found anything to use against the Spectre and it was annoying him. He knew Saren was ‘dirty’, to use a human term; he felt it in his gut.

Chellick nodded politely. He wanted to leave, not be caught up in this investigation. Shepard perked up at this information, her attention now completely focused on the Turian in front of her. “Have you found anything?” she asked Garrus, trying in vain to hide the hope on her face. Garrus could see that she really wanted to know if they would be able to stop Saren.

“I can’t discuss anything I’ve found until the day of the trial,” Garrus snapped, his frustration growing. He knew the Commander would be able to help him, but he couldn’t allow her to see the information beforehand.

“We should go, Shepard, and let Garrus continue his investigation,” Chellick muttered, nudging her toward the stairs. She glared irritably at him; she wanted to push for the information, but knew that it would be a stupid idea.

“Yeah, we should. I’ll see you at the trial, Officer Vakarian,” Shepard relented, nodding to Garrus as
they walked away. He watched the couple as they left him; Shepard walked with confidence, her human body moving lithely through the crowd. She moved with a grace that he had never seen in a human, other than the dancers at Chora’s. She vanished around the corner, and he released the breath he hadn’t even realized he had been holding. He scowled for a moment before walking away. This was a first for him; having a reaction to a human. He didn’t hate their species, but he found them too soft. He had never been attracted to them.

Disgusted with himself at where his thoughts were turning, he decided to resume the investigation in the morning; when the people he needed to speak to would be available. With a sigh, he headed toward Flux instead of Chora’s. Chellick and Shepard were there already and he didn’t want to meet up with her again.

Shepard walked into the bar, heading straight for the Turian bartender. “Hey, Shepard, your usual?” he asked with a grin, already pouring the shot. “Yep, and keep them coming tonight,” she grinned, taking the glass from the bar and tossing back the shot of Jack Daniels. The bartender watched with amusement. He had seen other humans drink this particular liquor, and they would cough, or grimace; but this woman didn’t even flinch. He poured her JD mix, knowing that’s what she would want next. “So, anyone I have to watch for tonight?” she asked with a pointed look. The last time she had been in here, there had been a few humans that didn’t know what the word ‘no’ meant. She had taken care of them quickly and brutally. “Nope, everything’s good tonight,” he smiled, relaxing; pleased that there wouldn’t be any fighting while he was on shift. He passed Chellick his drink, keeping his thoughts to himself. He still didn’t understand how he could be with a human, but it wasn’t his place to judge.

Chellick and Shepard took a seat at one of the tables. She leaned back, trying to relax, but that was easier said than done. The image of Garrus Vakarian returned unbidden to her mind. He was well built for a Turian; his fringe was full with no extras poking out, unlike some other Turians she’d met. He had piercing blue eyes, and she had seen the intelligence glowing within them. He was one of the better looking Turians she had ever met.

The silence grew thick, and the couple glanced at each other. Shepard was bored, and Chellick watched her, wondering how he could change her mood. “Do you want to go somewhere else?” he asked once he saw that she wasn’t relaxing.

“Flux?” she asked with a grin. “I need to move and there is no place to dance here.” “Let’s go, but I am not dancing,” he replied, grimacing; though he enjoyed watching her dance. Chellick returned to the bar, paying for the drinks. Shepard waited for him outside. Flux was crowded as usual, and people were already dancing. Shepard waited for him outside. Chellick returned to the bar, paying for the drinks. Shepard waited for him outside. Flux was crowded as usual, and people were already dancing. Shepard’s body moved involuntarily to the beat of the music, walking next to Chellick as he searched for a place to sit. There were no tables empty, but one table had only an occupant. He didn’t know whether to sigh in frustration or stand there grumbling. Garrus was the occupant. Chellick would be willing to sit with him if he was sure that Garrus wouldn’t bring up the investigation or anything else about work.

“Mind if we join you?” he asked, approaching the table and nodding toward the empty chairs. “Go ahead,” Garrus answered, leaning back in his chair and taking a slow sip of his drink. His first thought was to leave; but he was finally relaxing, so he decided to stay. Shepard returned from the bar with three glasses, one of which was placed in front of him. “Thanks,” he mumbled uncomfortably.

“I’ll be back in a bit,” she stated, gulping down half a glass of some unrecognizable brown concoction. He looked questioningly at Chellick when he didn’t join her on the dance floor. “I don’t dance, Garrus,” he muttered, his focus turning to the dance floor, a smirk forming on his mouth. Garrus’ gaze followed Chellick’s and his eyes widened. Shepard was mingling with the crowd, her body moving to the beat of the music. She swayed, her body moving sensually, her thick ebony hair flowing around her. The lights of the dance floor caught the deep black of her hair, showing blue highlights. Garrus glanced around the bar and noticed that quite a few humans had taken notice of her. Some were watching her hungrily. He’d heard of her reputation as a woman not to cross, and a part of him wanted to watch one of the humans make a move on her. He was quietly
itching for some action and he knew that Shepard would provide it, if one of the humans pushed his luck too far.
The next song played and she stayed on the dance floor, moving with the music. For someone who said that humans didn’t interest him, this particular human certainly caught his attention. He didn’t understand it, nor did he like it. He glanced at Chellick, shocked to hear the Turian purring in public, of all places.
The song ended and Shepard came back; her eyes no longer clouded by stress and fatigue. They now appeared bright and alive. She downed the last of her drink and returned to the bar. Two human males moved to stand on either side of her. One leaned close, whispering something to her. She turned, a sneering smile on her face as she answered him, and the two humans backed off quickly. Garrus watched all this with amusement as she moved back to their table. She carried three drinks once again. She passed each of them their drink, about to take a seat. Another human, this one taller and more muscular, moved behind her. She glanced over her shoulder at him, giving him a disdainful look. It was obvious the male didn’t take the hint. “So, what are you doing tonight, sweetheart?” he slurred in her ear, loud enough for everyone at the table to hear.
“Not you!” Shepard spat scornfully.
“Bet I couldn’t change your mind,” he leered at her. Shepard felt her skin crawl as the man pressed up against her from behind.
“I wouldn’t hold your breath. If I were you, I wouldn’t bother asking any other female here until you can fill out your pants properly,” she replied, smirking as he growled furiously. Chellick chuckled quietly, while Garrus flinched, feeling the man’s pain at being insulted in this ‘most sensitive’ area. She took a seat, leaning back and relaxing with a smile as she watched the human walk away.
Garrus glanced down at the drink she just placed in front of him. He wasn’t planning on getting drunk tonight, but if he continued at this rate, he would be. He watched the crowd, glancing back at Shepard every now and then. Just as she was draining her second glass, the waitress came with a refill. He raised a brow ridge at this. For such a small human she sure could drink. Her eyes were just starting to turn glassy; so while she wasn’t drunk, she was obviously starting to feel the effects. Garrus wondered what she would be like when she let loose. So far he’d only seen her once up close, but she carried herself with a definite air of authority.
A slow song started and Shepard grabbed Chellick’s arm, tugging it with a pointed look. He shook his head, amused when she started pouting. Her control was slowly lessening; and he knew she would be more carefree and friendly from this point on. He loved it when she was like this; her guard down for him to see.
Her gaze snapped to Garrus and a sly grin split her face. She rose to her feet, gliding over to him. Chellick hid his laughter. What Shepard wanted, she usually got; and right now she wanted someone to dance with. She gave Garrus a pointed look and to Chellick’s shock, he motioned her toward the dance floor, following right behind her.
The bartender watched Shepard move toward the dance floor with the Turian. It figured that the great Commander Shepard had a thing for aliens. Humans obviously weren’t good enough for her. For the past few months, he had watched her and the Turian at the table come into the bar. At first he didn’t mind, they were paying customers. It started annoying him when he began seeing humans being ignored in favor of the aliens.
This very evening she had rudely turned down two of his human regular customers. That alone was enough to piss him off; but when she rejected his brother brutally, insulting his manhood, he had seen red. He stared at her for a moment as she danced closely with the Turian; her arms were around his shoulders and his hands were at her waist, near her hips. He glanced at the Turian at the table; seeing that he couldn’t take his eyes off the dancing couple. It made him sick. It was about time Shepard and her aliens learned a lesson. Maybe when she figured out that they were no better than animals, she will turn back to humans.
He brought out three more glasses, filling them with alcohol. He glanced around quickly, a smirk curving his mouth as he poured something extra into their drinks. He mixed them thoroughly before bringing them over to the table. Without a word, he collected his money and went back to the bar.
Shepard would soon learn that humans and aliens don’t mix.
Shepard leaned her head against Garrus’ chest for a moment, letting the music move her body.
Garrus glanced down at the top of her head, feeling very uncomfortable. Shepard was lost in the rhythm of the music, not thinking about her actions or the nervous Turian she was leaning on. When the song ended, they returned to the table, seeing the drinks that awaited them.
Garrus looked down at the glass in front of him thankfully and followed Shepard’s example, draining half of it. Chellick had nearly emptied his glass, since he needed something to keep him occupied while they were dancing. As soon as they were done, another round of drinks was placed in front of them; this time without being requested.
Chellick drained his without thought as he watched Shepard. His body began heating up and he knew he wanted to leave the bar. To do what he really wanted, he needed to be alone with Shepard.
She tossed her head, and her hair caught the light, shimmering as it moved. Her green eyes deepened as her desire began to grow. He knew he couldn’t wait to get to the apartment, and the only other option was to rent a room above the bar.
Garrus had eyes only for Shepard, and his plates were already starting to shift as he watched her. A desire unlike any he has ever felt before burned its way through him. Neither Turian noticed the other man beside them as they imagined what they wanted to do with the beautiful human woman.
Garrus began purring as an urgent need raced through his body. His plates were fully shifted beneath his armor, so no one noticed; but at the moment, he didn’t care if the entire bar knew. His fringe was beginning to swell from his raging desire.
Chellick groaned as Shepard ran her hand along the sensitive skin beneath his fringe. Both Turians fought with the last of their control not to take her in the middle of the bar. Garrus moved his chair closer to her when Chellick left the table temporarily. Shepard turned her attention toward him. A smile lighting her face, she ran her fingers along one of his mandibles. It took everything in him to stay seated and not toss her over the table and find relief in her.
“Shepard, let’s go. I’ve rented a room here.” Chellick stated, lifting her to her feet hurriedly. He couldn’t wait any longer; he was fighting every instinct, and his need to have her was riding strong on his heels. She stopped him and held her hand out for Garrus. Chellick’s eyes narrowed; he was about to growl a warning, but Shepard turned to him.
“Please,” she purred, her body close to his as she stared at him with passion-filled eyes. The trio left quickly, heading toward the room Chellick rented.
The bartender watched them leave, a malicious grin on his face. His plan was working perfectly; by morning, Shepard will realize that the aliens she loves so much were nothing but animals.
~ooooooooooooo~
The three of them entered the rented room, barely making it across the threshold. Chellick used his talons to tear through Shepard’s shirt. Garrus was standing right behind her; his face pressed against her neck, lightly nipping her skin. She moaned as Chellick’s hands found her breasts and squeezed lightly. His talon flicking over her nipple, and a shiver ran through her body.
Garrus ran his hands down her silky smooth skin uncertainly; coming to rest at the top of her jeans. His talons hooked onto the material, and the sound of ripping denim filled the room. She moaned as Garrus gripped her hips in both of his hands, holding her in place. His talons dug into her flesh, bringing a moan to her lips. Chellick released the buttons on her jeans pulling them off the rest of the way. She stood naked in the room as both men let their gaze travel down her athletic body.
Chellick’s body was burning with need, and Shepard felt like she was on fire; her body already wet with need.
She vaguely heard something heavy clunk to the ground behind her. Chellick stripped quickly, and she shoved him back toward the bed. His hands were urgent as they travelled over her body. He didn’t care that his talons were making marks on her skin or that she was bleeding in places. He needed to be inside of her. He wanted release so badly that it felt as though he would go insane.
Garrus followed behind them, his hands never leaving her skin. Shepard shoved Chellick forcefully back onto the bed, and she quickly straddled his hips, spearing herself on his length. The sight brought a moan from Garrus as he knelt behind her.
Garrus pushed her forward, forcing her to lean into Chellick. He couldn’t wait anymore; his body was tortured with his need for Shepard. With one forceful thrust, he entered her only available orifice, leaning his body over hers. Chellick had his teeth clamped on one side of her neck; Garrus leaned to the other side, sinking his teeth into her shoulder, ignoring her gasp of pain. Both Turians thrust hard into her willing body, losing themselves to the overriding pleasure that was controlling them all. Shepard’s cries became more urgent as the two Turians came close to finding their release.

Garrus’ hips snapped forward, entering her deeper than he had before; filling her with his fluids as he found his release. Chellick followed him moments later, bringing Shepard to her own explosive orgasm. Garrus collapsed onto Shepard’s back, panting heavily. Shepard lay fully on Chellick, too tired to move.

For several minutes they remained in that position. Finally, Chellick looked over Shepard’s shoulder and saw that Garrus had fallen asleep on top of her. He shoved his fellow Turian off to the side, and Garrus landed in a heap on the bed, his breathing deep and even. Chellick moved over so Shepard could have the comfort of the soft bed instead of his hard body. His limbs moved tiredly as exhaustion overcame him. He sighed contentedly, curling up against her warmth. He wrapped one of his arms around her waist, and hesitated for a moment when another arm joined his. Garrus curled up against her back, burrowing his face into her hair.

Chellick’s eyes finally fluttered closed when he could no longer fight the fatigue that overcame his body. His last thought was of how odd the situation was; neither of them was ever this exhausted after sex.

~oooooooo~

Garrus was the first to awake; he glanced around groggily, his limbs stiffening when he felt a warm, soft body next to him. His whole body snapped to attention as he slowly glanced beside him. Shepard lay against him, sleeping soundly. Chellick lay on her other side, sleeping just as deeply. He tried to think back to the previous night, but he only had a vague recollection of the events. Trying not to disturb his companions, he jumped out of bed; grabbing his armor and dressing quickly. He needed to leave as soon as possible. He had just spent the night with Commander Shepard, the one who accused Saren of killing Nihlus; and Chellick, a fellow C-Sec officer. He had never been with a human before and had never planned to. Now he had not only broken that rule, but he had slept with another male Turian, as well.

His stomach felt queasy, and his head was starting to pound at the thought of what had occurred. He prayed to any divinity that would listen that Shepard wouldn’t remember anything when she woke. He knew that the chances of it were slim at best, however. At least he would only have to see her again at the trial, and he thought he could avoid her easily enough on that occasion. He would just pretend that it never happened, unless she decided to hunt him down and kill him slowly. He heard rumors that she had a temper, but she had been willing. She had invited him to the room, both of them burning with lust. What didn’t make sense to him was where that lust had even come from. How could it happen that as soon as they entered the room, he needed to be with her as desperately as he needed to breathe? Something about the entire situation didn’t make sense. He’d have to contemplate it all at a later time. His first priority was to find evidence against Saren. He knew Saren was guilty. Shepard didn’t seem to be one to make wild accusations, but he couldn’t find any evidence to back up her claim. Most of the information on the Spectre was classified and Garrus had less than two days left before he had to bring his report to Executor Pallin.

Garrus tried to block all memory of the previous night from his mind as he headed for his next lead, hoping this interview would give him more information than the others had. Back in the room, Shepard moaned loudly. She felt like she had been run over by something heavy and then scraped up off the floor. Her head was pounding, and her muscles were screaming at her. Certain places on her body were very tender; enough to bring concern to her mind. The last time she had felt like this was the night she took Chellick and Nihlus to bed at the same time. She closed her eyes and groaned; her body stilled as she vaguely remembered the activities from the night before. She was almost positive that she had spent the night with Chellick and Garrus Vakarian, the Turian she had only just met. She glanced beside her. Chellick was sleeping soundly,
and the rest of the bed was blessedly empty. She sighed in relief; maybe she had imagined the entire event.
She turned back to Chellick and gasped as a sharp pain shot through her neck. She reached up and felt puncture wounds on both sides of her throat. “Shepard, are you alright?” Chellick asked with concern when her moan of pain woke him.
“No, I am not alright!” she growled lethally. “Tell me that what I think happened last night was a dream!”
“No, it wasn’t. You slept with both me and Garrus,” he answered slowly, fearful of how she was going to react.
“What the fuck?” she yelled, her voice bouncing off the walls. She got off the bed wincing; claw marks were clearly visible on her back each time her hair moved out of the way. Punctures that were still seeping blood showed on her thighs. Chellick’s eyes widened as he took in the injuries, and he winced as he noted the bite marks on her neck. He vaguely remembered biting her, but he hadn’t thought he did that much damage. Garrus’ bites were clean. He had only clamped onto her to hold her still, but Chellick had been vicious.
He got out of bed, remorse weighing heavily on him. He went over to her and placed a gentle hand on her shoulder. “Shepard?” he called to her quietly, his voice thick with sorrow.
She turned to him, and fire burned bright in her eyes. She was very angry and he hoped she wasn’t going to turn her rage on him. “How the hell did last night happen? I only had five drinks! That shouldn’t have made me that inebriated,” she demanded, a look of confusion on her face.
“You’re right, and I plan on finding out exactly what occurred. If Garrus or I had been any rougher, we could have seriously harmed you,” Chellick bit out, his Turian eyes turning into slits as his blood boiled at the thought of the pain they could have inflicted on her.
“I think I’m going to find a doctor and have these wounds checked out,” she muttered, wincing in pain as she moved. “I think I have them in some very sensitive areas. I’m also going to have the doctor check my system for any traces of drugs,” she added quietly, her voice carrying a lethal edge.
“Shepard, even if someone did drug us, you can’t kill them when you find them,” Chellick warned her. He knew that would be her first thought if someone had crossed her.
“Oh? And who’s going to stop me?” she asked with a menacing smile that sent a shiver of warning down his spine.
“I will. I would have no choice but to stop you,” Chellick told her quietly. “Come on. Let’s get you to the doctor.” He helped her dress, taking care not to cause her more injury. Her shirt was a lost cause; she used only her coat. He walked with her to the doctor’s office, concerned that she wasn’t moving with her usual grace.
She took a seat on one of the beds as he waited in the reception area. He could hear her explaining the situation to the physician. The doctor moved over to him, allowing him to see Shepard. “She gave me some pills and medigel for the wounds,” Shepard told him as he took her hand in his. The thought that she had been injured badly enough to require a doctor made him hesitate for a moment. It felt like he was the one injured.
“I also suggested that there be no intercourse for a few days. There was some internal damage that has already started healing on its own. You’re lucky she is a powerful biotic. Her own energy has already started healing some of the damage. I’m sure it was originally a lot worse,” the doctor reprimanded him. He stepped closer to Shepard, pulling her into a hug; the feel of her close helping to allay some of his fears.
“We should head to my apartment. I need to rest for a bit,” she grumbled, scowling at him. As they exited the medical clinic the doctor stopped them, passing them more medigel.
They walked slowly to Shepard’s apartment, and she slowed down as someone caught her attention. Chellick followed her gaze. Garrus stood nearby, talking to a few people. He noticed the couple, but did nothing to break away from his conversation. When his interview finally ended, he hesitantly made his way toward them.
Garrus was nervous about seeing Shepard so soon. He should have expected this, but he was still quite concerned. “Shepard,” he nodded cordially.
“Just for your information, what happened last night is not going to be repeated,” she stated harshly. “Oh, and you might want to talk to the bartender at Flux before I get my hands on him. He drugged our drinks.”

“Are you sure of that?” Garrus asked hastily. If her story was true, it helped to explain everything that had happened. He knew the human in question, and he would definitely be seeing him soon. That man was going to learn a few things before Garrus arrested him.

“What the fuck do you mean, ‘am I sure’?” she sneered. He took a good look at her, and she looked like she had just stepped out of a bloody battle. He could smell the blood on her and wondered how much damage he and Chellick had actually inflicted on her. His stomach turned at the thought that he had harmed her even the slightest.

“Yeah, stupid question,” he mumbled, embarrassed.

“No, not a stupid question; just the wrong time. I’m not in the best of moods right now,” she muttered, a sad look on her face. He glanced at Chellick, and the C-Sec officer was gaping at her. Garrus assumed from that look that the Commander rarely admitted that she was wrong.

“Well, I should continue my investigation,” Garrus muttered, for lack of anything better to say. Garrus watched as they made their way to a group of nearby apartments. He knew that had to be Shepard’s place, since Chellick lived at the other end of the wards.

The doors closed behind them, and Chellick scooped a hissing Shepard into his arms, walking her straight to the bedroom and placing her gently on the comforter. She glared at him as he left the room. He entered her kitchen, grabbing some food and making her a quick cup of coffee. Food was extremely important for her right now. She was close to being drained; her body expending too much energy healing her.

He walked back into the room to find her lying on top of the blankets naked. He knew not to jump to any conclusions as to why she was in that particular condition; the warning in her eyes was clear enough. “It’s irritating to have anything touching my skin,” she grumbled. He placed the tray beside the bed, taking a closer look at her skin. She had a rash that he hadn’t noticed before. He was quite used to this happening when they had sex, and it was second nature for him to grab the ointment on her bedside table and rub it onto her skin. She moaned as he worked her muscles, trying to loosen them up a bit.

“Roll over and I’ll see if you have a rash on your back,” he murmured, chucking when she complied quickly with a grin. The rash on her back wasn’t as bad as the one she had received from him. He knew that the ph level in a Turian’s skin changed with age. The doctors had explained that to them both when they began seeing each other regularly.

He purred as he rubbed the ointment into her skin, working the tight muscles at the same time. She sighed and moaned, then grumbled when he stopped. “Damn, I should take you on long missions with me,” she joked, winking at him.

He leaned into her, flicking his tongue out and brushing it against her lips in a light kiss. Chellick pulled back before she could react. He left her there to eat, wanting to grab a shower. He stopped abruptly when he came across a picture of the two of them on her dresser. His chest tightened as he looked at the picture. It showed him standing behind her, his arms holding her securely. She leaned back against him, an impish grin on her face. She wasn’t looking at the omnitool, but at him. He purred as he held the picture in his hand, the memory of it making him smile.

It was in that moment that he realized that his feelings for Shepard were stronger than he had ever admitted. He wanted something permanent with her. Not the casual relationship they currently had, where they could look for pleasure elsewhere if they wanted to. He wanted to be her mate.

He jumped into the shower, trying to figure out a way to tell her without ruining their current relationship. He knew she always wanted honesty; she had demanded that of him. But there were times when lying was safer. He only hoped this wasn’t one of those times.

He left the shower, his decision made. Shepard was reclining on the bed with pillows piled behind her, her plate by her side. She was reading something on her omnitool, and her gaze flicked to him when he entered the room. He went to the closet just outside of her bedroom and grabbed a couple more pillows, bringing them with him.
“After the medigel is through with me, I’ll be grabbing a shower. I need to get the stink of the bar off of me,” she muttered. He smiled, stretching out beside her. She automatically curled up against him. She did indeed smell like the bar, but he could still smell the herbal scent on her skin. He knew it was the soap she used and loved, so he always made sure she had ample amounts of it.

“So, when do we get to visit that bartender?” she asked with a gleeful smile that promised pain for the human.

“You are staying away from him,” Chellick muttered, an amused expression crossing his face when she narrowed her eyes at him.

“You’re no fun,” she grumbled good-naturedly. “Fine, but Garrus had better take care of him,” she smirked.

“Oh, I’m sure he will,” Chellick reassured her. After a few moments, he cleared his throat and looked seriously at her.

“Shepard….” Chellick trailed off, temporarily losing his nerve.

“Hmm,” she mumbled, running her hand along the soft layer of his waist. He purred, catching her hand so he wouldn’t be distracted.

“Have you ever thought of having a more permanent relationship?” he asked her quietly.

“Why? Trying to get rid of me?” she asked with a grin, though her eyes expressed the seriousness of her question.

“No, I mean between you and I,” he said slowly, bracing himself for whatever her response might be.

Slowly she sat up, never once taking her eyes off of him. She knew what he was looking for, but she didn’t think she loved him. She cared for him more than anyone else she’d been with, but she knew it wasn’t love. “What are you suggesting?” she asked quietly, uncertainty clear in her eyes.

“I want us to become mates,” he answered hurriedly. She blinked slowly, trying to process this information. This was a large step; bigger than she had been expecting. She wasn’t sure what to say.

When those words left his mouth, she knew he had deeper feels for her than she had for him. She should have seen this coming, but she hadn’t really imagined he would ever become this serious.

“Chellick, I’m human; this could affect your standing with your people. This is going too far, too fast,” she answered him, hoping he would understand.

“I want something more permanent than what we have. If we can’t be mates, then what?” he asked, frustration evident in his tone.

“In other words, you want us to be exclusive?” she asked with a smile. He returned the smile hesitantly, nodding his head; watching every facet of her features for any signs or warnings that she was angry. “Well, with humans there are different ways of going about this. You can live together, become engaged or get married. Last but not least, you could take the partner’s word that there would be no one else in their life,” she said softly. “But why settle on me, Chellick? I am a Commander in the Alliance. I’m not here very often and my job could take me away for a long time; even move me to another planet.”

“I know and I haven’t had a problem with it yet,” he answered pointedly.

“I’ve been here most of the time. It was only my last mission when I was gone for any length of time. My next mission could take me away for a year or more; it wouldn’t be the first time something like that happened,” she argued, trying to make her case.

Chellick watched her, not pushing the subject. He knew she wasn’t ready. She made some valid points, but he knew he could live with any conditions she set. He was sure she would always come back at some point and they would remain in communication, no matter where she travelled. He watched as she left the bed with a thoughtful look on her face. He got up and followed her as she made her way to some cabinets in the back of her bedroom that were always kept locked. She never told him what was in them before. When he asked, she only told him it was her heritage. When he asked what that meant, she would smile and say it was ‘native’. He didn’t understand what she meant. She was human and she never explained it to him, so he didn’t push the subject. That was the way it had always been; but he knew it was time for a change. He now needed an answer.

She knelt down, taking out a case and opening it carefully. For the first time he saw what was inside.
It was a strand of leather with beads and feathers decorating it. The beads were placed showing pictures and symbols. She removed everything carefully, taking out three dark pieces of leather. He could smell what appeared to be oil from within the box. Inside one of them was a necklace with a feather; she placed that one back into the box. The next were paints, along with another necklace; this one more intricate in its artwork. She refolded that one and placed it back in the case, as well. The last one was a band of some kind. It was adorned with brilliant colors that showed a sun, and a flying creature on a red background. A small smile curved her lips as she placed everything back in the case and returned it to the cabinet. She took a seat on the couch, patting the spot next to her.

“I told you I was native. My grandmother made sure that I was raised knowing the Old Ways. Before she died, she passed a few things down to me. This is one of them,” she said, showing him the brightly colored band.

“What do you mean when you say you are ‘native’?” he asked, hoping he would get a complete answer this time.

“On Earth, there are many different races. We are all humans, but each race has its own culture. So, I’m what’s called Native American. I belong to what used to be known as the James Bay Cree tribe. In these current times, most people have lost their heritage; most don’t know what it means anymore. But my grandmother made sure I knew and would never forget where I came from,” she explained to him. He listened intently as she spoke, noting the wistful smile that curved her lips.

“What’s that?” he asked, looking at the band. It wasn’t as big as the others he had seen in the case. This one was obviously meant to tie around something, but he wasn’t sure exactly what.

“You wanted a commitment. I can’t become your mate because that would cause a lot of problems for you. I won’t marry you for the same reason,” she began. “This is the closest I would be able to go. In my culture many years ago, this would have been given to my husband on our wedding night. In this day and age, it doesn’t have much meaning to others because most of my people have forgotten… but I haven’t,” she stated softly, meeting his eyes as she finished her statement. His chest tightened as she explained her gift. Chellick pulled her into a crushing hug, needing to feel her close to him.

She leaned into him, her arms curling around his waist. Holding him tightly, she wondered if she had done the right thing. She cared for Chellick very much; more than anyone she had ever been with. She was scared that he would take this too far and announce the new status of their relationship. If that happened, her attempts to save him from the repercussions of his people would all be for naught. She passed over the beaded leather; it was usually worn as a bracelet, or tied to the receiver’s ankle. Chellick didn’t have the same type of ankles that humans had; but with Shepard’s help, they managed to tie it around his wrist so he could wear it under his armor.
Making New Friends
Shepard lay on her stomach as Chellick ran his hand along her back. She moaned as the pad of his fingers dug into one of her muscles, releasing the tension; his claws tickling her skin. Tomorrow morning was the trial; she was worried about how it was going to turn out, though she had done everything she could to convict Saren.

“Shepard, you have to quit worrying,” Chellick murmured as he felt her tense once more.

“That’s easier said than done,” she grumbled, burrowing her face further into the pillow. She groaned as his skillful fingers found a particularly tense muscle.

“Now, will you quit thinking for tonight? You’re putting all my hard work to waste,” he muttered when he felt her muscles tighten beneath his hands once more. He shook his head, chuckling in amusement. He tried his best to keep her calm, since he knew that certain ‘monthly difficulties’ were coming for her very soon. It was a time of month that scared the shit out of him. He usually vanished until the time of bleeding stopped and it was once again safe to speak to her. He hoped she would be off of the Citadel when she started bleeding this month; though he knew it was probably wishful thinking on his part. He could already smell the first hint of blood that warned him that her time was imminent. The last time she’d been on duty during her problems, it had been hell. He received reports regarding her use of unnecessary force; and for mouthing off and instigating fights at Flux and Chora’s. It almost came to the point where he would have had to confront her; but thankfully that hadn’t happened. Instead, she had been called away on the mission with Nihlus. He sighed, missing his friend. He knew it wasn’t Shepard’s fault, but he couldn’t help wondering if she might have saved him had she been by his side on Eden Prime.

If it wasn’t her anger or her testy manner, then it was her biotics fluctuating out of control that put people in danger. When they first started their relationship, he thought that sex would help. He had instigated an intimate moment and it was the worst and most painful mistake of his life. He never again attempted such an act and he now sympathized with the human males he heard bitching about their female companions when they bleed.

He thought back to one of the conversations he had with his fellow C-Sec officers. A few of them knew he was with the Commander; most thought it was a simple fling. At the time, they had been right.

He smirked as he replayed the memory.

“I really don’t want to go home tonight. The wife is PMSing something fierce,” one officer said to another. Chellick had been walking down the hall when he heard them talking. They stopped their conversation for a moment when they saw him, and he could sympathize with the pained expression on the man’s face.

“Hey, Chellick, you’re with Commander Shepard. Is she just as bad as other women?” the disgruntled officer asked.

“Well, I have three new complaints on her today,” he answered, flinching slightly. He hoped Shepard hadn’t heard them speaking or he would be dead.

“I’ve heard it’s worse with biotics, and Shepard is known as a powerful biotic. So how bad is it?” the previously silent officer inquired.

“It’s hell. I don’t know how the males of your race survive when your females bleed,” Chellick answered, completely confused by the entire situation.

Both men laughed, shaking their heads at him. “Try chocolate; it’s a life saver. And you may want to avoid the house as much as possible,” they suggested.

“Chellick?” Shepard called, bringing him back to the present.

“Sorry, I was just remembering something,” he muttered, glad that her back was to him.

“Well, whatever it was, it will have to wait. I need you to get off of me,” she grumbled. Chellick took an apprehensive sniff of the air. Yep, hell has arrived, he thought forlornly as he recognized the
familiar odor. It had grown a great deal stronger in the last several minutes. He rose quickly from the bed, wishing to avoid any violence. “There are some chocolates in the fridge, and your Swiss Vanilla coffee is in the cupboard,” he rattled off hastily as the bathroom door closed behind her.

He rose from the bed, wondering if he should leave and save himself. He glanced around and knew he couldn’t leave, not when she needed him tonight. The trial was the next morning and she needed to be in a sane mind set.

He moved to the kitchen, preparing them both something to eat. He made her the Swiss Vanilla, hoping it would lighten her mood. He was so focused on what he was doing that he hadn’t noticed she had come out of the bathroom. Small, slender arms encircled his waist; her warmth seeping into his back where her head rested. He was mildly shocked that she was giving him any attention right now. Maybe he had been wrong and she was still healing from their evening with Garrus.

He emptied his hands, turning in her arms. She lifted up onto her toes, kissing his mandible lightly before her tongue flicked out and licked it. He held absolutely still, trying to figure out what was going on. “What’s wrong?” she asked softly.

“I smell blood…” he trailed off, waiting for her wrath. “Hmm, yeah I know,” she muttered, leaning her head against his chest. She smiled when he didn’t relax. She understood his concern; she knew she wasn’t at her best during this time of the month. Usually he ran, but this time he had stayed with her. She curled herself into his lean frame. She needed this right now, though she would never ask for it out loud. She was Commander Shepard; a hardened soldier, not a woman who sought comfort. She was always willing to give aid to others, but Chellick seemed to know when she needed someone to take care of her. His strong arms wrapped around her, holding her tightly, and his purring vibrated through her.

She was worried about the trial; worried that Saren would go free, and Nihlus wouldn’t have the revenge he so righteously deserved. The idea that he was gone and she wouldn’t be seeing him again was painful to remember. She missed him and wanted Saren to pay for his death. For a briefest of time, Nihlus had seen her without her shields in place. He recognized her as human and not merely a super soldier. Chellick thought of her as human, as well; but she wasn’t comfortable enough to let him fully within the walls she had constructed all her life.

She was now committed to him, and had showed him something of her history, but he still didn’t understand. He still didn’t think it was good enough, but she could not and would not give him anything more. He was too well respected among his people and she didn’t have strong enough feelings to take their relationship any further. She could settle for him, and that was what she was doing right now. She knew she would never find true love; not with her choice of employment. She thought about the promise she made to Chellick, and how it could affect her future. To an outsider, it would look like a content relationship, and that would be correct. However, ‘content relationships’ could be broken easily with enough strain.

They ate quietly, barely looking at each other. Chellick worried that Shepard would allow her temper to get the best of her at the trial and damage the case against Saren. She had tried on many occasions to get him to help her focus her mind through sparring. That would have been extremely beneficial on this particular evening, but his answer was always no. He felt she was too soft to spar with a Turian. He wondered why she was always so upset during this time, but she couldn’t explain it to him.

They went to bed holding each other, but Shepard couldn’t settle down. She was far too restless, while Chellick was already asleep. She left him a quick note telling him she was going for a walk, and hoped he would understand and not come searching for her.

She walked the Lower Wards. It was late at night and the unsavory elements were out in force; not that she really cared. “Commander, what are you doing out here this late at night?” a familiar voice asked from behind her.

She turned to find Garrus standing there, watching her curiously. He had a data pad in one hand, and a drink in the other. “I’m too restless to sleep,” she muttered absently. She leaned back against the wall, crossing her arms over her chest as she watched the C-Sec officer. He was younger than
Chellick and appeared more physically fit. His sharp blue eyes matched the markings of his clan that were tattooed on his face. They didn’t appear as jaded as Chellick’s; instead, they burned with intelligence.

“So, did you find our bartender?” Shepard asked with a raised brow. Garrus watched the small woman, not sure what to make of her. She seemed agitated even though she was trying to appear calm.

“No, he doesn’t work until tomorrow. I plan on visiting him then,” Garrus smirked. He couldn’t wait for that confrontation. What that human did was beyond imagination; he didn’t understand how a human could do that to one of their own. How could he have used a drug on her so that she would fuck two Turians. That was a dangerous game he played. The Commander could have been seriously hurt. He was actually surprised that she wasn’t more damaged that she appeared. Neither he nor Chellick had been gentle; both under the influence of the powerful drugs. Those drugs had made everything seem so desperate; taking away any control the two men would have usually had.

“Before you pay him a visit, find me! I want in on the action, too,” Shepard grinned evilly.

“Don’t worry, I will,” Garrus promised. He started to ask for her omnitool link so he would be able to contact her, when he noticed her hands glowing faintly. “Commander, is everything alright?” he asked, nodding down at her hands.

She raised them up, and an annoyed look crossed her face. “Yeah, just fine. I think I’ll be heading back home now,” she muttered bitterly.

“Wait, how do I contact you?” he asked in a rush when she turned to leave. She moved toward him, activating her omnitool. Their links were exchanged, and he looked up in surprise when he realized that she had given him her personal link.

Garrus watched her walk away, still concerned with the condition of her hands. He knew she was a biotic, but he didn’t understand why her hands would be glowing when she wasn’t in battle. He watched as she disappeared around the corner. He thought about following her to make sure she was safe, but he didn’t want to overstep his bounds.

Shepard walked into her apartment, and found Chellick sitting on the couch, gazing up at her as she walked in. She came over to him, taking a seat on the sofa. “You should still be sleeping,” Shepard smirked, leaning back against the cushions.

“I couldn’t after I felt you leave the bed,” he told her, wanting her to open up to him. His wait was in vain, he knew. She wasn’t one to talk; at least not about her personal problems. It bothered him, but that was her way and he had to learn to accept it.

“Sorry for waking you,” she mumbled, rising from the couch. “I met up with Garrus on my walk, and we talked for a few minutes.” Chellick kept his face impassive, but hearing that she had been with Garrus irked him; especially after what happened at the bar. She had basically begged for him to join them, and he still couldn’t shake that image from his mind. He realized that it had been the drugs talking, but it still angered him.

Without a word, he crawled into bed with her, but she didn’t curl up to him like she normally did. He lay there, staring up at the ceiling, his mind in turmoil. Shepard slowly drifted off to sleep, and her dreams were filled with blue, piercing eyes. A small smile played across her lips as she slept.

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Shepard woke to an empty bed, but she could hear Chellick moving around in the other room. She smirked in her darkened room, remembering her dreams. The alarm on her omnitool sounded, letting her know that it was time to go.

Kaidan and Ashley waited at the Commander’s kitchen table as the Turian busied himself with breakfast. Ashley didn’t know how the Commander could stand to let him touch her. Kaidan idly sipped at his coffee, waiting for Shepard to arrive; he didn’t really feel comfortable being inside her personal residence.

It didn’t take long for the Commander to appear. She was dressed in her military uniform, her thick black hair pulled into a bun. Chellick watched her for a few moments before passing her a mug of coffee.

“Are you ready for the trial?” Chellick asked her as she took a seat with her crew.
“As ready as we possibly can be. Hopefully the Turian Councilor will have an open mind this time,” Shepard muttered.
“I’ve heard that he hates human’s, so I wouldn’t bet on it,” Kaidan stated. Chellick smirked; it seemed Shepard’s crew didn’t know what she had done. He wondered why she chose to keep it from them.
“We should be going,” she told them, heading for the door without waiting for her companions. Chellick thought about going with her, but he had his own work to do. He watched her walk away with her crew, his mind on the previous night. Something about it bothered him. He had been shocked when he saw her smiling in her sleep; he didn’t think that was possible. He’d never seen her smile like that before; her face soft and full of contentment.
Shepard walked into the Tower, taking the elevator to the top; where the Council would be waiting. She just hoped she would arrive before Udina had the chance to open his mouth. She walked quickly up the steps and froze. Garrus was arguing with Executor Pallin. She walked over to them slowly, listening to their argument.
“Garrus, I am not going to stall the Council!” Pallin spat.
“I just need more time,” Garrus snapped, his frustration showing.
“Pallin, if there is a chance that he can get information with more time…” Shepard trailed off as he turned angry eyes toward her. She met his angry stare with her own; refusing to back down from the large turian.
“I will not stall the Council with ‘maybes’,” Pallin bit out coldly. “You don’t know if he will find information. If it was a certainty, then I might have more to work with; but as it stands now…..” he growled, storming away. After he departed, she turned her attention to Garrus.
“I hope the Council listens to you. I know Saren is dirty,” Garrus muttered, his frustration growing.
“Did you find anything?” Shepard asked.
“No, everything to do with Saren is classified. I am not going to stop until I find proof, however,” he snapped, his voice rising slightly; catching the attention of the people nearby.
“Why do you care?” Ashley asked, a hateful tone to her words.
“Saren is a traitor to his people. He gives Turians a bad name, and he needs to be stopped,” Garrus retorted heatedly.
“Commander, the Council is waiting for us,” Kaidan reminded her. She sighed, moving toward the high platform before them.
Garrus stopped her, his clawed hand gripping her arm. “I am not giving up my search. I have one more lead to follow. Come find me what when you can. We have other unfinished business to attend to,” he stated softly so her crew wouldn’t overhear.
“Don’t worry, I’ll find you,” Shepard smirked, glancing down her arm pointedly so he would let her go. He glanced down and his hand jerked away as if it had been burned. A sheepish look crossed his face. Though they were parted, Garrus could still feel her arm as acutely as if he was still holding her. He was embarrassed to discover that his talons had been idly running along her armor as he whispered to her. He hadn’t even realized he had been doing it.
He left the Commander and her crew quickly before he did something else that was out of character for him. He didn’t bother watching her talk to the Council. He walked the halls deep in thought. He thought about inviting Chellick to the meeting with the bartender, but he wasn’t sure how his fellow Turian would react. He roused himself from his contemplation forcefully; it seemed his mind had made the decision for him. He looked up to find himself standing in front of Chellick’s office door. He walked through the door, unsure of the reception he would receive. He and Chellick weren’t close friends, but they had worked together often in their earlier careers. “Garrus,” Chellick hissed in greeting. He really didn’t want to talk to his fellow Turian. He didn’t even want to see him after the incident at Flux. He still remembered the way Shepard had looked at him; how her face had softened for him. Most painful of all was the way she had basically begged for him to join them. They all had been under the influence of drugs and hadn’t been thinking straight, but now he was and he knew that Garrus was competition.
“Chellick, Shepard and I are going after that bartender later today. Do you want to join us?” Garrus
asked, ignoring the angry greeting. Chellick slowly rose to his feet, menace in each step. He moved toward Garrus, trying to keep his anger in check. Finding out that Shepard was going to be alone with Garrus and she hadn’t told him lifted his anger to newer heights. Now Garrus stood in his office, throwing it in his face.

A low rumbling started to fill the room. Humans wouldn’t have heard it, but Garrus recognized the warning. He stood his ground, however, glaring at the other turian. “Chellick, what the hell is wrong with you?” he asked, his own anger rising.

“Stay away from Shepard,” he snarled, moving still closer to Garrus.

Garrus was about to say something, but a clawed hand shot out, striking him. “I can smell her scent on you!” Chellick spat accusingly. Chellick knew what was coming over him; knew he was being irrational. But the thought that Garrus had stood close enough to Shepard to pick up her scent was more than the territorial Turian could take.

Garrus readied himself as Chellick’s warning scent filled the air. Chellick moved quickly and Garrus stood his ground, waiting for the attack.

Two humans stood fearfully outside of Chellick’s office, listening to the ferocious sounds coming from within. They overrode the door, weapons readied in case Chellick was in trouble. They halted in their tracks as they saw the two officers fighting viciously, claws and teeth bared. The two humans backed out, not sure what to do.

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Shepard stood in front of the Council with her crew at her back. Udina was talking with them, trying to get them to see reason in his own unique way; by barreling forward. The Turian Councilor watched Shepard closely, her words at their meeting playing over his mind. That, along with what little information Garrus had provided in his report, planted a small seed of doubt in his mind.

Saren’s holo-image stood before them; his sneer growing as each piece of the human’s evidence was dismissed. The Turian Councilor could see the look of victory in Saren’s eyes. What the Councilor didn’t understand was why Saren hadn’t shown up in person when he knew there was going to be a trial.

He could see Shepard’s frustration as she snapped at Saren. The verdict was about to be passed and the other two Councilors were waiting for his input on the situation. He couldn’t allow the charges to stick; there simply wasn’t enough evidence. Even Shepard admitted as much. The Council rendered their verdict; and though he knew it was the correct decision, something inside told him there was more the story than they knew. “When and if you do find evidence that we can use, this case will continue. Until then, Saren is free to go,” he declared to the assembly.

He glanced at the holo image of Saren, and the anger he saw on his face worried him. There was hate in his eyes that made him question his decision to let him go free. He knew in that moment that Saren was up to something, and it was in everyone’s best interest to discover the details.

He followed the other Councilors off the platform. He gave Shepard a pointed look and wondered if she would understand his meaning. He wasn’t sure if humans could read Turian expressions. She returned his gaze with a slow nod and he knew she understood.

Shepard watched the Turian Councilor bemusedly as he walked toward his office. Captain Anderson waited to speak until he had her full attention. “Meet me at Udina’s office and we’ll discuss our next step,” he said quietly.

“You’ll have to wait. The Turian Councilor wishes to speak with me,” she murmured thoughtfully, glancing toward his closed doors. Anderson started to reply, but Shepard was already walking away. Anderson turned to the ground crew. “Follow me. You can wait for Shepard in Udina’s office,” he ordered.

Shepard walked into the Turian Councilor’s office. He sat there, leaning back in his chair. “Shepard,” he called, nodding toward the chairs before his desk.

“Why did you want to see me?” she asked, taking a seat.

“What makes you believe Saren committed this offense?” he asked, leaning forward in his chair. The look on Saren’s face still bothered him.

“Nihlus was one of your better operatives. How many people would ever get close enough to shoot
him in the head? None that I am aware of. I had a hard time sneaking up on him. Nihlus was always on alert whether he was around friends or foes. The dockworker said Nihlus called the one who killed him Saren. Lastly, the bastard was too smug during the trial. I know he killed him, and with or without your permission, I am taking him down,” Shepard stated coldly.
The Turian Councilor watched her for a few moments, “Nihlus’ final transmission was still on his omnitool when it was delivered to us. He said that you should become a Spectre, but your evaluation wasn’t completed. Personally, I don’t think most humans should be allowed anywhere near a Council seat, or allowed in the Spectre program,” he told her. She sat there listening, her expression a mixture of confusion and annoyance.

“Why did you ask me here?” she asked him. She was tired of trying not to over step her bounds; and with the way she was feeling at the moment, she was more than willing to step on some toes.

“That isn’t for you to know!” he stated harshly. He wasn’t about to answer that question for her.

“Then this meeting is over. I have a killer to catch,” she stated, rising to her feet. She was about to leave when he stopped her.

“He’s untouchable, Shepard. He’s a Spectre; you need to remember that,” he warned her coldly.

“Even the greatest of men fall,” she said with a smile that sent a chill down his spine. “I will find Nihlus’ killer and God help anyone who gets in my way.” Her parting words rang in the silent room as the door closed behind her.

He stared at the door for a few minutes, tapping the omnitool and allowing it to play. This was an encrypted message he found on Nihlus’ omni-tool; it was marked as personal and private. Usually the Council wouldn’t bother reading these messages; they would simply pass them along to the intended recipient. He couldn’t do that now; that person had just left.

He had listened to the message and was shocked by its contents. Though slightly disgusted, Nihlus had made him think. He sent the message to her personal address as a final gift to Nihlus. His thoughts about humanity hadn’t changed. He would do everything in his power to make sure they didn’t rise to power too quickly. Shepard, however, was different, if everything he read from Nihlus’ reports could be believed. His own personal observation made him believe that she would make a good Spectre. Her determination to continue her pursuit of Nihlus’ killer was the final proof he needed.

Shepard sent a message to Garrus, letting him know that she was free to visit Flux. She wasn’t about to go searching for him around the Citadel, as he could be anywhere.

Garrus stood in front of Chellick, rage burning through him. It had taken two humans and another Turian to break up the fight. The Turian was looking at them with an amused expression on his face. Chellick sat at his desk fuming as they waited for Pallin to show up.

It didn’t take long for him to show. Pallin walked in, kicking the others out. “What the hell happened here?” the Executor nearly shouted.

“We had a difference of opinion,” Chellick muttered, not looking up.

“A misunderstanding,” Garrus muttered. His face hurt where Chellick’s nails had scraped over him.

“Whatever the hell it was better not happen again or the both of you will be reprimanded and forced to go on leave without pay,” Pallin hissed, his anger at his fellow Turians at an all-time high. He wasn’t going to push the issue of why they were fighting. He recognized the scent of a territorial male. He knew this was about Shepard. She was the only female in Chellick’s life as far as he knew.

Garrus he wasn’t sure about, but the territorial scent wasn’t coming from him.

“Yes, sir, it won’t happen again,” Garrus muttered, glaring at Chellick. He was about to say something to Chellick, but his omnitool beeped. He glanced at Pallin, silently asking if he could check it. Pallin nodded, watching him like a hawk.

He opened the message and winced; this was definitely the wrong time to receive this particular missive. It was from Shepard, letting him know she was ready to see the bartender. “Garrus?” Pallin asked, a curious expression on his face.

“I have someone waiting for me. She’s ready to take care of some unfinished business,” Garrus told him. They both glanced at Chellick when he hissed; his marking scent becoming stronger, filling the
room with its warning.

“Go take care of your business,” Pallin ordered Garrus. He waited until Garrus was out of the room before turning his attention to Chellick. “And you! Get yourself under control. She’s a human! Garrus and Shepard will be working together to find evidence on Saren, and I expect you to act accordingly.” His lecture at an end, the Executor walked away, leaving Chellick to reflect on all that had happened.

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The bartender looked on fearfully as the Turian and Shepard walk toward him. Shepard nodded toward the Turian, her cold eyes trained on the bartender. The human stood there shaking, unsure what to expect, but knowing it would be painful. “So you enjoy drugging your costumers?” Shepard asked, her soft voice dripping with menace.

The bartender opened his mouth to respond with a biting retort, but all that came out were pathetic noises. “Officer Vakarian, he’s all yours,” Shepard muttered, turning away. She couldn’t take her revenge on the guy; he was too pathetic to be worth her time. Garrus moved up, slapping the security cuffs on him. He couldn’t harm the human either; not when he stood there shaking in terror. Garrus smirked in disgust as he thought of how anticlimactic the arrest had been. He wanted to teach the bartender a lesson, but the condition of the criminal had taken the fun out of it. He could see Shepard was in the same predicament as she rolled her eyes and shrugged her shoulders.

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Anderson watched as Shepard entered the office, looking completely pissed off. He walked over to her before Udina could say anything; her crew members followed, taking positions at her back. “We need to find more evidence,” he told her.

“What about that Turian? He wanted Saren stopped as much as we do. Plus, he said he would be checking out another lead,” Kaidan reminded them.

“Very true. I wish I had remembered; I just left Garrus,” Shepard smirked. She sighed softly as they went over how to find Garrus and the other possible leads that they could use. The meeting was short, but informative. She just wished she had remembered to speak with Garrus when they were together.

“Were should we go first?” Ashley asked.

“Let’s head to Chora’s. We’ll talk with Harkin and see what he has to say. Then we will be going to see the Shadow Broker agent, Barla Von,” Shepard stated as they left the Tower.

They used the transport to get to Chora’s Den. Kaidan and Ashley both sat in the vehicle, gripping anything they could hold onto as Shepard drove. Ashley closed her eyes, praying quietly as Shepard did a sharp nose dive toward the parking area. Kaidan took deep, even breaths as his stomach rebelled against the harsh treatment.

Shepard exited the vehicle without a problem; Kaidan and Ashley left with shaky legs. They both looked at Shepard’s back balefully as they moved to stand beside her. She took the lead, heading for the entrance when two men started shooting at them. Kaidan took out one, and Shepard threw the other hard into the wall with her biotics. She walked over to the one she killed, checking him for identification. “These are Saren’s men,” Kaidan murmured.

“Sure looks like it. Let’s move out!” she ordered, leading the way into her favorite bar.

“Hey, Shepard, want your usual?” the bartender called out when he saw her.

“No, I’m on duty right now. Where would I find Harkin?” she asked him.

“He’s over by the door leading to the back rooms,” he answered as he poured a drink for one of the patrons.

She walked toward the back, stopping before a drunken middle aged man. The meeting with him was quick, though Harkin raised a few questions about Captain Anderson. She filed that away for later when she could speak with him in person.

“Are you sure you want to go to the Shadow Broker now or do we need to go get Garrus first?” Kaidan asked as they left Chora’s Den.

“We’ll get him first. I know where the medical clinic is; it’s not far from here,” she told them, leading the way through aback alley.
She stopped at the door, remembering the last time she was here; after her evening with Chellick and Garrus. How ironic that she was about to pick up one of those people. She shook her head with an amused smile.

She entered, watching as Garrus moved slowly along the wall in a crouched position. Five men were in the room, their guns trained on the doc. What the hell was going on now? she thought tiredly. Quickly Garrus moved, putting a bullet in the head of one of the men that was holding Dr. Michel hostage. Ashley moved quickly, shooting two more, while Kaidan threw one across the room. There was one attacker left and he had the best cover.

Shepard moved forward, looking at the large crates. She dropped her guard for a moment, allowing her biotics to wash over her. Garrus watched Shepard in amazement; a blue light shimmered around her, and her hands burned brightly with biotic energy. He wasn’t sure what she was going to do. There wasn’t much that could be done unless someone was going to move ahead and flush him out. The crates were too heavy to be moved with biotics and the guy wasn’t coming out on his own. Garrus’ mandibles went slack as Shepard lifted the crates into the air, moving them backward and allowing them to drop on top of the assailant. They all grimaced as they heard the crunch of bones.

“Shepard, did you really have to drop those crates on the guy?” Ashley asked in disgust.

“I didn’t see you offering any other solutions, and no one seemed to want to shoot. So what the fuck am I supposed to do, allow him to shoot me while the two of you stood there and twiddle your thumbs?” Shepard spat, glaring at her crewman. She didn’t wait for either of them to respond.

Garrus stood silently, waiting for her to finish berating her crew. He watched as she walked over to him. He tried not to notice how she moved; her lithe grace, or the sway of her hips. He tried not to notice that the mark where he bit her was still visible; if one knew what they were looking for.

“Nice shot, Garrus,” Shepard smirked, looking down at the man with a bullet in the center of his forehead. She chuckled as he grinned back at her.

“Dr. Michel, are you alright?” Garrus asked, turning toward the physician.

“Yeah, just a little shaken,” she murmured, her face pale as she glanced at Garrus. She turned her attention towards Shepard, glancing over her body. “I see you’ve healed up nicely,” she said softly, forgetting that Garrus could hear. He gave her a questioning glance, which she chose to ignore for the moment.

“Do you know what they wanted?” Shepard asked, glancing down at the body near her feet.

“They were looking for a Quarian,” she replied. Garrus and Shepard glanced at each other before turning back to the doctor.

“Why were they looking for the Quarian?” Shepard asked.

“I sent her to see Fist; she said she wanted to speak with the Shadow Broker. She said she had sensitive information that he would be interested in,” Dr. Michel answered. “She mentioned that it had something to with the Geth.”

Garrus and Shepard looked at each other quickly; their eyes bright with excitement. “She might have information about Saren,” he murmured, “but Fist isn’t working for the Shadow Broker anymore. He works for Saren now.”

“Fuck, we need to stop her before Fist gets his hands on her!” Shepard swore.

“There’s a Krogan mercenary being held in C-Sec that wants Fist, too,” Garrus added. “We should get his help. But this is your show, Shepard, and I want in on it.”

“Welcome aboard, Garrus,” Shepard didn’t even hesitate in her answer as she clapped him on the shoulder. The team moved quickly, heading to C-Sec to find the Krogan.

The Krogan watched as a human female walked in, certainty in her steps. A few of the people watched her with fear, while others gazed upon her with respect. Two humans and a Turian walked behind her, deferring to her. The humans that were trying to stop him from going after Fist smelled weak, while this woman appeared to be quite different.

He brushed by them, ignoring their threats, approaching the human female to test her courage. He leaned in close to her, attempting to dominate her. “Back the fuck up or I will make you!” she stated coldly, not flinching when he smiled, showing her his razor sharp teeth.

“You threatening me, Human?” the mercenary asked, not in the least intimidated by this small, soft
person in front of him. He found her quite amusing.
“Nope, warning you,” she grinned, and her smile made him hesitate for a moment; it reminded him of a Krogan woman’s smile, just before they try to rip off your quads. He bent closer, challenging her to do her worst. Shepard laughed at his audacity and gave him what he asked for. She threw him across the room, and he hit the wall next to the C-Sec officers who had been talking to him. He stuck it with a loud crash, sliding to the ground. Shepard waited, preparing herself in case he decided to charge or take this pissing competition further.
Garrus watched the scene before him, impressed with what he saw. He thought he would have to help defend her; but when he saw the large Krogan go flying, his mind was quickly changed. He watched as the Krogan rose to his feet, laughing heartily. He walked over to Shepard, eyeing her with respect.
“You’ve got quads, human,” he said and nodded in respect.
“I’m going after Fist and I thought you’d want in on the action,” she said with a smug smile.
“I’ll give you fair warning. I’m going to kill Fist!” the Krogan stated bluntly.
“I’ll give you fair warning, as well. Kill him before I get the answers I want and I’ll make what I just did to you feel like a pat,” she smiled chillingly, her eyes turning blue with biotic energy; her hands burning at her side. The Krogan watched her for a moment. He had heard the rumors about her and believed what she said. She made throwing him across the room look easy and maybe for her it was. But he wasn’t going to cross her and find out how truly powerful her biotics were.
“Done,” he nodded, agreeing to her terms. “Now let’s go pay Fist a visit.”
To be continued…
Fist and his cronies were waiting for them at Chora’s Den. They fought their way through the bar to the back room, where Fist was hiding. Garrus and Kaidan took one side of the bar while Wrex took the other side on his own. Shepard stood there watching them in action; ready to step in if needed. She wanted to see their fighting styles to determine if they were worthy allies on her search for Saren. Shepard kept her attention focused on Garrus. He was the one who was most adamant with regards to her mission. She smiled to herself as they took down the last attacker, suitably impressed with their fighting. If she had it her way, she would be asking both aliens to join her on her search for Saren; even if it wasn’t authorized by those above her.

The last thug fell and Shepard stayed by the door, a smug grin on her face. Wrex turned to her with a scowl. “Why didn’t you help out?” he asked belligerently; not impressed that the human was making the aliens do all the work.

“Shepard, why would you be testing us?” he asked coldly.

“Call it a test of your skill,” she smirked as she answered the krogan, taunting him with her tone. He growled low in his throat, a clear warning that he wasn’t pleased with her words.

“You were questioning my skills?” he asked coldly.

“Yes. Is that a problem?” she asked in a silky tone.

“I don’t like to be tested,” Wrex growled, wishing he could teach this human a lesson. The memory of how she threw him with ease stopped him from carrying through with his desire. Garrus walked over to her, watching her curiously. He wasn’t insulted that she would be testing them. It was what a true turian leader would do. “Shepard, why would you be testing us?” he asked, wanting to know her better.

“I wanted to see how good the both of you are. If I have to leave to go after Saren and either of you are willing to tag along to kick his ass, I need to see what skills you possess. I wanted to determine your strengths and weaknesses before I even contemplated taking you with me,” she explained to the krogan, even though Garrus was the one who asked. She didn’t bother hiding her annoyance.

“Well, let’s go have a chat with Fist,” Shepard stated coldly with a raised brow toward the krogan, silently asking if he was going to push his luck.

Wrex watched the small human closely. He was impressed with her. She wasn’t just a strong biotic; she was a born leader, as well. He wasn’t sure about her taste in crew, though. The other biotic he could understand, but he couldn’t comprehend her interest in the C-Sec turian. He was too rigid in his rules.

Wrex followed close behind her, smirking as she walked through the bodies with confidence; not flinching when she stepped in someone’s blood, or when she had to kick a body out of her way. She looked down at the defeated thugs she passed, making pleased sounds; her head nodding.

He waited to see what she would do with the two living workers standing in front of her. “You have two seconds to get out of my way or I will give you a permanent sex change,” she said, grinning maliciously at them. He chuckled as the guards swallowed, eyeing the woman with trepidation. The turian and human moved out of their way as they beat a hasty retreat.

Shepard and her crew walked into Fist’s office, Shepard sticking close to the wall. Garrus moved to the opposite wall, pressing close to it. Wrex was about to move out into the open, but Shepard stopped him with a shake of her head. She motioned to something with her gun. He followed her hand and a feral light filled his eyes. It seemed that Fist had upgraded his protection. Two guns sat on either side of the room protecting him and Fist moved about with quite a few places to hide.

Shepard closed her eyes, taking a deep breath; trying not to let her biotics overrun her. Kaidan saw her starting to glow and yanked on the Krogan’s arm in warning; trying to get him to move back. For all his efforts, Kaidan received a furious glare.

Shepard let her biotics go, hitting one of the guns. Kaidan followed suit, hitting the other one. She nodded to Garrus and Wrex. They both moved out of cover and started shooting.

“Stop! I give,” Fist cried out. Shepard thought for sure that she would have to step in between Wrex
and Fist; but to her shock, Wrex backed off, his gun still pointed at the criminal. He made room so Shepard could move forward.

“Where is the quarian?” Shepard asked, her voice lethally calm.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” he replied. Wrex and Kaidan shifted uneasily when they saw the look on her face. Garrus looked on curiously, wondering what her next move would be. He hadn’t noticed the look on her face since her back was to him, but Kaidan’s reaction warned him that it would be something he wouldn’t like.

Garrus watched as Shepard’s hand started glowing. That didn’t bother him, as a lot of biotics do the same thing. It was when she turned blue glowing eyes to him that he became concerned. She moved forward, laying her hand on Fist. “I don’t like liars,” she growled, shooting energy into him. Fist felt her energy slice through him; he screamed out in agony as his whole body felt like it was about to be ripped apart. She shoved more into him and he couldn’t scream even if he wanted to. The pain was beyond bearable and his mind couldn’t focus. He began shaking uncontrollably.

Garrus watched as Fist’s screams stopped. He lay convulsing on the floor and Shepard didn’t look like she was going to stop. Garrus stepped forward, placing a hand on her shoulder. When that didn’t work he moved her away, breaking her contact with the immobile man. Her eyes were empty, as if she wasn’t there. “Shit, her biotics are riding her. She’s losing herself to it!” Kaidan swore.

“What do you mean?” Garrus asked quickly.

“When a human is powerful in biotics, there is always a risk that we can lose ourselves to it. That is what’s happening to her. She needs to be ‘jarred awake’, for lack of a better term. But there is a problem; dealing with her anger afterward.

“You’ve seen this happen to her before?” Garrus asked him. He wanted more information since he had never heard of this before and he didn’t want to do something that would harm the Commander. Her eyes were still blue, but her hands and arms had returned to normal.

“Yeah, once, right after she found Nihlus’ body. We were going down a platform and it was filled with geth. She used her biotics, but something had changed. I had never seen or heard of someone doing what she did without passing out afterward. She used Push, but it was more of a wall and basically wiped out all but a few of the geth. Those were soon dead, as well. I had to slap her to bring her back. When she came around, I found a gun pointed at my head,” Kaidan explained quickly.

Garrus didn’t slap her; he grasped her arms, digging his claws in and shaking her lightly. She snapped to her senses and anger burned in her eyes. Garrus met her furious gaze without flinching. Shepard stared at him for a moment, unsure what to make of the look on his face. Slowly she backed out of Garrus’ hold.

Fist lay on the floor whimpering, his whole body wracked with pain. He looked at the woman who did this to him, fear filling his eyes. “Last time, Fist, where is the quarian?” Shepard asked calmly.

“I sent her to meet with the Shadow Broker,” he mumbled.

“No one meets the Shadow Broker. Even I was hired through an intermediary,” Wrex cut in. “Saren wants her. She’s supposed to meet the contact in the alleyway,” Fist muttered. He flinched when he saw the coldness in her eyes. His legs were numb. He tried moving them a few times, but he couldn’t. It was as if they weren’t there.

Wrex smiled cruelly, raising his gun and pulling the trigger. Fist stared up at them sightlessly. “What the hell do you think you are doing?” Garrus bit out angrily as he stared down at the dead body of an unarmed man.

“Trust me, Garrus. After what I did to him, it was a mercy killing,” Shepard muttered, a sadness in her eyes that shocked him to see. He wasn’t sure what to think of her statement. The other human looked at her with understanding, moving out of her way so she could pick up some files from the floor.

“We have a quarian to save and we need to move quickly,” Shepard muttered, racing toward the front room. Gunfire exploded ahead of them. “Shit!” she yelled in frustration as she ducked for cover. They were running out of time; they needed that quarian. “Kaidan, if I lose it again, get to that quarian!” she ordered, rising to her feet. She already lost herself to the feeling of power once; she
hoped it wouldn’t happen a second time. She dropped her shields, feeling the dark energy surround her. She forced that dark energy out, knocking everything in its path out of the way.

She took a deep breath, rebuilding her shields quickly; thanking God that she hadn’t lost herself a second time. She didn’t get everyone, but she made a dent in the attack force. The area near their hiding place was cleared, but there were still more opponents blocking their exit. “We don’t have to time to fight them. We need to get out of here,” she stated firmly.

Shepard made a run for the door, using mild biotics to lift and knock her assailants out of the way. They made it outside without anyone following them. “Shepard, I’ll clean up here. You can go after the quarian,” Wrex said, walking back into the bar.

They moved quickly toward the alley, hoping they weren’t too late. Shepard sighed with relief when she saw the quarian up ahead, surrounded by several of Saren’s men. “Garrus, get her to safety if you can. She is too important to lose,” she asked him instead of ordering. He gazed at her, those green eyes trapping him for a moment, and slowly nodded his head.

Shepard pulled her gun, shooting at the closest target. Garrus moved quickly to the quarian, but he had to duck from gunfire. Kaidan and Shepard slowly removed the attackers. Garrus took out a fellow turian, leaving the rest alone so he could get to the quarian. He just reached her when the last man dropped.

As they listened to Saren’s voice on the quarian’s datapad, Garrus and Shepard smiled at each other. They finally had the proof they needed to take him down.

~ooooooooooo~

Udina stood trembling from rage in his office as the reports of gunfire from Shepard reached him. He was seeing red by the time she walked into his office. “What do you have to say for yourself, Shepard? Firefights in Chora’s Den, and threatening a bartender at Flux,” he ranted. He was about to continue when she stopped.

“If you would shut the fuck up for one minute, then maybe I would tell you!” she snapped coldly, giving him a murderous look that he should have paid more attention to. Garrus watched how she talked to her ambassador and he wasn’t sure what to think. She was being insolent, disobedient and downright disrespectful to him. He listened to the ambassador and didn’t like him; he seemed terribly slimy. So he wasn’t sure if he should be grinning that Shepard put him in his place or worried.

Udina sneered at Shepard, but she continued as if she hadn’t just slapped him in the face. “She has information on Saren,” she said pointedly and nodded toward the quarian. They listened as Saren’s voice played through the machine, crucifying himself with his own words. Anderson smiled as he listened to Saren basically admit to the attack on Eden Prime.

The questioned the quarian thoroughly, allowing her peace when they thought they had gotten all they could from her. “I’ll set up a meeting with the Councilors,” Udina said, rushing over to the terminal. He scowled when he received his answer. “We can’t see them for another two days,” he muttered furiously.

“Contact the Turian Councilor. He will get us a meeting faster,” Shepard told them, remembering his parting words and the meeting in his office.

“It doesn’t work that way. You don’t speak directly to the Council; you speak with the secretaries to book audiences with the Council,” Udina spat, looking at her as if she was beneath him for not knowing this.

Shepard glared at him and pulled up her omnitool. Quickly she wrote a quick note to Executor Pallin, all the while smiling smugly at Udina. Her omnitool beeped when the message was sent. She did what she wanted; asking the Executor to contact the Turian Councilor and tell him she had his evidence. They needed an audience immediately. The note was terse and to the point, and she cringed when she sent it; wondering if she had over stepped her bounds.

Udina glared at her, wondering what she was up to. She never took her eyes off of him, a challenging look in them. How he hated this woman! She was making him look like a fool at every turn. Firefights in public areas, mouthing off to him, threatening her own humans; she was a political nightmare for him.

Her omnitool beeped once more and her smile turned smugger, if that was possible. “When did you
say our meeting with the council was?” she asked sweetly. Udina glared at her, unsure what game she was playing.

Garrus watched her, amused at the challenging look she was giving her ambassador. He listened as she asked her question. She said it sweetly, but he could tell it was a setup. He could see she was enjoying this; her crystal green eyes sparkled with mirth and her mouth was curved in a smile, making her seem less hard. That smile brought back memories of their time in the bar, when she leaned forward and had a smile like that just for him. He remembered how he had leaned closer without thinking about it and she had done the same. He knew they both had been under the influence of drugs at the time and he didn’t know why he was having these inappropriate thoughts; now of all times.

“You heard me, it will not be until two days’ time,” Udina bit out.

“Fine, you have your meeting then. I’ll be seeing them tomorrow morning at ten,” she smirked at Udina, who looked at her in shock.

“I’ll be accompanying you to this meeting. I wouldn’t want your attitude to mess things up more than they already are!” he sneered at her. She had just made him look like a fool in front of everyone.

Anderson stayed silent as he held his laughter in. He glanced at the turian, watching him closely. He hadn’t taken his eyes off of Shepard since they entered. The quarian was watching her just as intently. He was about to step in and dismiss them when the door of the office opened once again. A krogan walked in, heading straight for Shepard. He stood next to her, nodding to her respectfully. Anderson watched this and wondered how she did it.

“Find anything useful?” she asked Wrex with a raised brow.

Anderson watched as the krogan brought his omnitool close to hers and sent something to her. She glanced at it, smiling. “Fist’s men are no more; Saren has less of a hold here now,” Wrex told her with a chuckle, ignoring the other humans in the room.

“We see the Council tomorrow at ten, then we hand over the information and hopefully Saren loses his Spectre status,” she grinned at him.

“What’s the plan now?” Garrus asked.

“I’m going to C-Sec for a few moments and then I’m going back home. Whoever wants to watch Saren lose his Spectre status, meet me at my apartment tomorrow morning. We’ll head to the Tower from there,” she told them before sending the address to their omnitools.

Garrus followed her out, with Wrex and the quarian right behind them. Kaidan and Ashley stayed behind, not sure what to make of the recent events. They had heard that Shepard preferred aliens to humans, but they didn’t truly believe it until now. Kaidan didn’t mind, but Ashley was silently fuming.

Garrus watched as Shepard walked towards Chellick’s office; anger and another deeper emotion came over him. He scowled, brushing the feelings away. He didn’t know what caused it and at the moment, he didn’t care.

Shepard stood silently, waiting for Chellick to finish his report. Once he was done, he glanced up at her. Anger burned through him as he looked at her. He could smell Garrus on her; his scent was thick in the air. They had been very close, too close as far as he was concerned. He rose to his feet, stalking toward her. His control was gone and his primal instincts were ruling him. He grabbed her to him, pinning her to the wall with his body. Her grunt of pain filled his ears and he growled against her skin in pleasure.

He felt her push back; with a roar of anger, he shoved her roughly against the wall. Garrus’ scent covered her and Chellick’s marking scent rose quickly, erasing the other C-Sec officer. He leaned down, his face nuzzling her neck. She moaned, squirming against him.

His teeth clamped deeply in her skin, holding her still as he pressed as much of his body against her as he could. He wanted his scent to cover every inch of her. His other hand undid the straps of her uniform, letting them fall to the floor with a clatter.

He removed his teeth from her skin, purring when he saw his mark on her skin. He flicked out his tongue to lick the blood that pooled there. He vaguely remembered that he would have to take measure of that later. Shepard reached up and roughly grabbed his fringe, yanking him down to her
mouth. She licked his mandibles then nipped one of them hard with her teeth. Sweet pain and pleasure shot through him. He moved without thought, only acting on instinct. He needed to make her his mate. She was his; no one else’s. He shoved himself roughly into her. She moaned, her eyes closing tightly in pain. Her nails dug into his fringe, telling him that she was feeling pleasure, as well. He drove into her roughly, the wall making sure she couldn’t move away. She moaned, burrowing herself into his body; her small teeth latching onto his shoulder. He could feel them as they dented his hard plating. He growled, his body moving quicker; thrusting in and out of her body relentlessly. His scent filled and surrounded her.

Her muscles clamped around him as she found her release. He shoved into her once more, finding his own release; roaring in pleasure. He slumped, his one arm supporting his weight against the wall. He tested the air, purring when all he smelled was his scent all over her, mixed with the tangy scent of blood. Slowly his feral mind quieted, allowing him to think rationally.

He looked down at the woman in his arms. “Shepard….” he began and couldn’t continue. He felt remorse at how he treated her. He knew he probably hurt her; she was human, soft. She wasn’t meant for an out of control turian.

“Well, that wasn’t quite the hello I was expecting. It was actually a lot better than what I was expecting,” she sassed, smirking at him. He gave a sigh of relief.

Chellick let her down and watched as she moved around collecting her armor. She dressed slowly, her eyes never leaving his. Shepard hid her wince and wondered why he had been so primitive. She knew that turians were territorial, but there was no reason for him to be. Before they took their relationship to the next step it hadn’t mattered; he knew she wasn’t just with him when she was off-world. He hadn’t shown this side of himself then.

“So, what set you off?” she asked him as she fastened the last of her buckles.

“I could smell Garrus on you,” he stated accusatorially, glaring at her as he moved across the room. He didn’t want to lose control again so soon.

“So? You’ll be smelling him a lot more when we go after Saren!” she snapped. “You had better get used to male scents on me. I work mostly with males!”

“Human males don’t matter, but another turian male….” he trailed off, his eyes narrowing into lethal slits.

“And if Garrus comes with me to go after Saren, his scent will be on me. You know this!” she cried, trying to reason with the pissed off turian.

He flared his mandibles in a show of dominance. “It doesn’t matter. He will know not to go near my mate!” Chellick said and clamped his mandibles close to his face in shock when he heard what came out of his mouth. Shepard narrowed her eyes angrily.

“Mate? We talked about this,” she reminded him coldly. “I think you should sleep at your place tonight,” she hissed before storming out of his office. Chellick closed his eyes, cursing himself for his stupidity.

~oooooooooo~

Shepard stood in front of the Council, waiting to see what they were going to say to Udina’s demand. She had all but given up the hope of being a Spectre. The Salarian and Asari Councilors were in agreement that she should become one, but there was still the Turian Councilor to consider.

“Most of humanity isn’t ready for the responsibilities that come with this title. All but one that I know of. Shepard, I am following Nihlus’ advice,” he announced, his eyes never leaving hers. She blinked a few times as he saw her unusual green eyes brighten and a smile form on her lips. She stood there proudly, nodding slowly to him as they introduced her into the Spectres.

She bowed respectfully to them. The Salarian and Asari Councilors had already departed, but he stood there watching her and her ambassador. He scowled as her own people shunned her on this momentous day. Her captain and ambassador walked away with barely any words spoken. Shepard stood there, staring after them. She didn’t seem offended or angry.

“Shepard, I think the Turian Councilor is waiting to speak with you,” Garrus mentioned when he finally overcame his shock of seeing the turian watching her.

Shepard walked over to the Councilor. “Thank you for allowing me this honor,” she murmured
respectfully. She knew this was a big step for him.

“From the information in Nihlus’ reports, you earned it; though I wouldn’t say this about the rest of your race. I looked up your service record and noticed that quite a few of your captains usually have you handle any alien and human contact,” he commented.

“Usually, they do,” she shrugged as if it was nothing. “Though they don’t like that I agree with the outlook some of you have of humans; that we are not ready to move ahead any more than we already are. Humans have a long history of being power hungry and then losing sight of what is important,” she told him.

She was about to allow him to go back to work when he stopped her, his eyes narrowed. His hand reached up to the collar of her armor and he moved it a few scant inches, showing the fresh teeth marks on her shoulder. She didn’t flinch; she met his gaze with equal measure, not ashamed of those marks. She knew he smelled Chellick’s scent on her.

The Turian Councilor wanted to be disgusted at what he saw, but he couldn’t. She was facing him with a challenging look; warning him as a female turian would. She wasn’t ashamed of what she did, nor of the mark. He would never be able to do it - mark a human. He knew they were a lot like Asari physically; but after the war and everything else that had happened between their people, he couldn’t see himself mating with a human. Though this one in front of him had earned his respect. She understood the situation better than most of her people. She realized that humans weren’t the only beings in the galaxy; all species needed to work together.

He wasn’t familiar with the scent that surrounded her as a warning beacon. He was ignoring it at the moment; not as an insult to the territorial scent, but simply trying to figure out the woman in front of him. “Do you have any leads as to his whereabouts?” she asked softly, or to him it sounded soft as he traced the wound, waiting for her to flinch.

“No, when we find something out, we will send you reports,” he answered her. She didn’t move away from his touch, and it made him wonder if she actually knew what this mark meant.

Shepard thought about batting his hand away, but something stopped her. Maybe it was the intent look in his eyes, or the fact that he seemed to be tracing the mark with purpose. She waited for him to make his intentions known, but he stayed silent; even after he answered her question.

“I should be heading back and gathering my crew,” she told him firmly. She made to move away but his hand tightened, his one claw digging in slightly. It hurt, but she was so used to having claws dig into her skin that she didn’t flinch.

“I’m wondering if you understand what this mark means to my people,” he murmured absently.

“No, I don’t. At first I thought it meant something, but I’ve had three different turians bite me on either side of my neck,” she told him bluntly. His eyes widened and his mandibles clicked against his jaw. She hadn’t seen that look from a turian before so she wasn’t sure what to make of it. “Each of them bit you on the neck or the curve of your shoulder?” he asked, just to make sure she hadn’t mistaken his question. He didn’t know why he was having this discussion with her, but she didn’t shun his question; she answered honestly. Unlike a lot of her people, who would lie until there was no other choice. That usually came when they were close to death.

“Turians usually don’t do this unless it is with their mates,” he told her and watched as the implication of his words sink in.

“Well, I guess it is different with humans,” she muttered, an annoyed look on her face. The Councilor didn’t add anything; he removed his hand and nodded. Shepard gave him a confused look, walking away from him toward her crew.

“What was that all about?” Garrus asked.

“I’m not sure. He asked about my marks,” she answered, shaking her head in confusion. Garrus’ eyes widened; he had seen her marks that very morning. He had been early getting to her house. She had been leaving the shower in a towel and he quickly turned his back to her; but not before he saw the marks and scars on her neck and shoulders. The mark he had given her was still there.

Wrex and the other two humans went their separate ways, but Garrus stayed with Shepard. They walked quietly back to her apartment and he took a seat at her table. “Shepard, when you go after Saren, I want to go with you,” he told her as he took a sip of the green liquid she gave him.
“You’ll have to talk to Pallin first and get leave,” she reminded him.
“That’s not a problem. What is the name of the ship we will be using?” Garrus asked her.
“That is a good question; one that I don’t have an answer for yet. When I find out from Udina, I’ll let you know,” she sighed, frustrated that she had to depend on that human.
“If you get to pick your crew, are you going to have Chellick go with you?” he asked her cautiously.
He didn’t want a repeat of what happened earlier. He wanted to try and avoid that at all cost.
“No,” she stated coldly, and her eyes had turned to hard emerald chips. His eyes widened at the look in them; he wasn’t sure what happened, but he knew it wasn’t good.

Shepard went to the docking pad where she was to meet Captain Anderson and Ambassador Udina. The message had come a few minutes before on a secured channel. She wondered what Udina had up his sleeve this time.

A sense of foreboding swept up her spine as she exited the elevator. Anderson and Udina were in a deep discussion and hadn’t noticed her yet. She moved toward them, slowly trying to hear what they were talking about.

Anderson noticed her first, and he stopped the argument between Udina and himself. “Commander, good of you to come so quickly,” Captain Anderson greeted her. She watched them both with cold calculating eyes, waiting for an explanation.

“Captain Anderson is stepping aside. The Normandy is now yours, Shepard,” Udina stated with a malicious glee that was wiped away quickly by the icy look in her eyes.

“Why isn’t Captain Anderson in charge of the Normandy?” Shepard asked him.

“You need a fast ship to go against Saren. The Normandy is the best there is,” Anderson stated. Shepard thought about questioning him more about it, but she was too tired and stressed at the moment.

“Fine, I am not going to argue about this,” she muttered.
“Remember, Shepard, you are representing humanity. So don’t forget where you came from,” Udina warned coldly. Maybe with those words, he could make her realize that it was up to her to bring humanity forward.

Shepard turned cold eyes to him. “I work for the Council. I answer to no one but the Council, Udina. You want humans on the Council, try working with them instead of using others to wheedle your way in. I will not place humanity as a top priority over other races. I’m a Spectre working for all races, Udina,” Shepard spat coldly.

Chellick sat at his desk; the news of Shepard becoming a Spectre had reached him. A part of him was proud of her, but another part was worried what this would mean for them. He knew she wouldn’t be on the Citadel much with her new mission.

He was about to leave for his apartment, but hesitated when his doors opened. Shepard stood there with her arms folded across her chest. “I thought I should come to tell you that I will be leaving in two days. I’m not sure when I will return. We are just waiting for the Normandy to be restocked, then Garrus and I go after Saren. He wanted in on this hunt, along with a krogan mercenary and a quarian on her pilgrimage,” she told him quietly.

Chellick stood up quickly, anger burning through him at the mention of the other turian accompanying her. He moved quickly toward her; his hands grasping her arms, moving her against the wall. “Why him?” he growled viciously.

Shepard shoved against his chest futilely. He scowled at her, grabbing her arms and pinning them behind her back. “Chellick, let go of me!” she warned him coldly.

“No! I will not have my mate around another turian she wants!” he thundered, his face inches from hers.

“I don’t know where you get your information from, but you need new sources if you think that I’m after Garrus,” she spat at him.

“I’ve seen how you look at him, and I remember how you begged me to let him join us at the bar,” he hissed menacingly, his claws digging deep into her arms as his anger mounted.
She thought about soothing his anger. She thought about reassuring him, but she couldn’t; not if he didn’t trust her. And he had already shown he didn’t trust her. “Garrus is going. He wants to stop Saren and I need someone with his expertise there. He is an excellent sharpshooter, and has extensive hand to hand experience. I will not turn him away because you demanded it,” she stated harshly.

“Are you really placing that turian before me? Are you going to dishonor me like this?” he asked icily.

“No, you’ve already dishonored me when you didn’t trust me. You did it when you called me your mate when I already rejected that idea. Then you treated me as your mate by marking me. You’ve already beaten me when it comes to dishonoring, Chellick,” she told him, glaring at him angrily.

“Now let me go.”

Chellick’s hands dropped away. He took a step back when the truth of her words registered.

“Shepard…” he began, but trailed off when she turned cold eyes to him.

“Don’t, Chellick. I’m not ready to forgive yet. I tried to save you from having your people look down on you, but you forced the issue and placed me in awkward position. It was the Turian Councilor who noticed the mark and your scent on me,” she said, looking at him disappointedly as the doors closed.

She walked through the halls of C-Sec, not paying attention to where she was going. Her mind was drifting through everything that had happened over the past few days. She didn’t notice Garrus as she walked past him; not until he placed his hand on her shoulder, stopping her. She glanced up at him, confused for a moment. “What can I do for you, Garrus?” she asked quietly.

“I put my gear on the ship already, as did Wrex. How is Chellick doing?” he asked, and he hoped that her next words wouldn’t be that Chellick would be joining them.

“We just had an argument. I don’t think things are going to last between us,” she told him. Garrus watched her, unsure what to say to that. “I would suggest you stay away from him for a while,” she muttered.

So he was still upset that he was around Shepard. He understood this was about territory, but Chellick had to realize that males would be around her. He should have known his scent would warn off male turians. He thought of the Turian Councilor and the way he treated Shepard. Maybe Chellick had a right to worry, but he was focusing his anger towards the wrong turian.

“Garrus…” Shepard’s voice cut across his thoughts. He glanced at her, just realizing that she had called his name a few times. She raised a questioning brow toward him.

“Something you wanted?” he asked, trying to cover his embarrassment.

“I was telling you to make sure you have all loose ends tied up here. There is a possibility that it will be a while before we are back here. You have until morning, then the Normandy leaves,” she explained briskly.

“I have everything already arranged. As you put it, there are no ‘loose ends’ left,” he grinned at her.

“Good,” she said and turned to leave, but Garrus stopped her. He didn’t like the idea of waiting to go after Saren. He didn’t understand why she would wait.

“Why aren’t we leaving right now?” he asked, close to belligerently. He flinched when he heard his tone of voice, but didn’t apologize for it.

“Well, if you don’t want to eat, I guess we can leave now. Though, if you start snacking on us humans, I’m throwing you out the airlock,” she smirked coldly.

“Sorry, Commander, I hadn’t thought of that,” he muttered.

“No, you didn’t. Now follow me,” she ordered.

She led him and Wrex to the Requisitions Officer for C-Sec. A sign by the door said ‘One patron at a time’. Garrus raised his brow ridge as she motioned for them both to follow her. “Shepard, you saw the sign,” the Requisition Officer stated.

“Yeah, well, we are ignoring it. These two need armor and better guns. I want them looking at the good stuff,” she stated. He glanced up at her, shocked to see the smirk on her face. He let out a breath of relief, thankful that there wasn’t going to be bloodshed; especially his own.

“So it is true. You are the first human to become a Spectre,” he grinned, pulling up the list. She
browsed through it quickly, picking what she wanted with the funds that she received from the Alliance or the Council. She didn’t care which group had provided it.
“We have Garrus’ measurements, but we will need the krogan’s,” he told her.
“Fine. When it’s finished, have it delivered to the Normandy,” she ordered brusquely.
Garrus and Wrex followed her out, wondering what the next plan would be. Shepard turned to the two of them. “Be at the Normandy by 0600 galactic time,” she told them. “Everything should be ready by then, hopefully.”
Garrus watched her walk off toward the elevator; he wondered what happened that she wouldn’t see Chellick. He knew from her words that they had an argument, but turians didn’t back down from an argument. Wiping those thoughts from his mind for the time being, he went to the Normandy for some sleep.
Shepard walked back to her apartment, taking the long way this time. She wasn’t used to being in her apartment alone anymore. She thought about sleeping on the ship, but decided against it. The sleeping pods on board were only so comfortable, and she would rather be in a bed. She entered the ambassadorial area of the Presidium, barely acknowledging those she passed. She wasn’t paying attention to where she was going; she was only following a path she knew well.

“Shepard, what are you doing here and not on the Normandy?” Pallin asked, stepping into her path. He had noticed her as soon as he left his office. She was very distinguishable in her movements; walking with a confidence and grace that was rarely seen, even on the Citadel. He watched as her steps slowed, and he could see that her mind was elsewhere. If the look on her face was any indication, her thoughts were dark, indeed.

Shepard yelped, startled at hearing her name spoken. Instinctively, she swung around, ready for an attack. Pallin stood still, hiding a smile at seeing her scared for a moment. Slowly he let his smile show; she had proven that he needn’t hide around her. She had earned his respect over time.

“Sorry, Pallin, I was thinking about other things,” she shrugged sheepishly.

Pallin was shocked to hear her call his name without his title. Years of training almost made him reprimand her for the slight, but he reminded himself that he wasn’t on duty at the moment. “You look troubled,” he murmured, wondering if he even wanted to get involved with this. He respected Shepard, but her personal life was just that – her personal life.

“I had a talk with Chellick yesterday. Shepard, your relationship with him should never have started,” Pallin told her bluntly, waiting for her anger. Shepard, your relationship with him should never have started.

“Pallin, what Chellick and I do during our personal time does not affect you. If it affected his work performance, then you would have a right to your opinion,” Shepard snapped coldly. She didn’t want to take out her anger on him. She could feel her biotics flaring; valiantly she fought to keep it under control. A single glance at her hand told her she was losing the battle.

Pallin took a step closer to her, keeping his voice low so the others near them wouldn’t overhear. “It is affecting his work. He was caught fighting with Garrus in his office. I am not talking about what you humans call fighting. This was defending one’s territory; with claws and teeth, not words. Do you know what this could have done to his career?” Pallin stated.

She looked up at the Turian, unsure what to say. She took a deep breath, holding her hands close to her side so he would not see the bright blue glow emanating from them. “A few days ago, we took our relationship further, but I told him I wasn’t going to be his mate. I knew this would happen,” she told him softly. “Now, I don’t know what to do. I am still learning about your race,” she murmured, closing her eyes. She ran her hands through her hair, shaking her head in frustration; it was a move Pallin had seen her make many times.

He listened to her words and knew them to be the truth. Chellick had overstepped his bounds; he knew it without her having to explain what had happened. He could see the discoloration on her neck, and he could detect the scent of blood on his tongue. He knew he couldn’t step in; it would only make matters worse. Turians were very territorial and they would fight to the death, if needed.

“Shepard, you need to end this and stay away from him,” Pallin stated firmly. He glanced at the woman beside him and wondered how she had ever ended up with Chellick. It was a well-known fact that she preferred aliens, particularly turians, to humans. He knew Chellick wasn’t right for her; he was extremely protective of those close to him. That was something Shepard didn’t need. In her line of work, she was constantly in danger. She needed someone who would understand her and
give her the freedom she required. He was surprised that she hadn’t kicked Chellick’s ass when he
attacked her, or when he forced the issue of being a mate on her.
“I know. It was apparent after our last fight. I was hoping to give us time apart while I searched for
Saren,” she muttered, “but I don’t think that is an option anymore.”
“No, it’s not an option!” he told her firmly. She was still learning their ways, so he couldn’t hold this
against her. At least she was willing to fix her mistakes. He could see that she never meant for it to
get so out of hand. “This isn’t something that you can brush off to the side. Time will only make it
worse, especially with a turian. Chellick in particular; he is acting like a turian protecting his mate.”
“I’ll handle it,” she sighed, rubbing the bridge of her nose.
“I believe you will, but a human isn’t as strong as a turian,” he muttered. He hadn’t wanted to get
involved; he was planning on going home and resting. But she couldn’t handle a turian on her own,
not when the turian was in a possessive state of mind. He would let her handle it, but he would have
to step in should Chellick decide to prove his dominance.
He didn’t know much about the Commander other than what he had learnt from their talks. He
already knew she hadn’t planned this, and was shocked when she said that they decided to take the
relationship further than simple lovers.
He walked with the Commander as she headed towards Chellick’s office. She gave him a curious
look and he knew what she was going to say before it even left her mouth. “If Chellick is having a
problem with me being around males of his race, should you be following me?” she asked, her
eyebrow raised and a smirk on her face.
“I’m only following to make sure that nothing happens. If Chellick steps over the line, I will put him
in his place,” Pallin bit out. Shepard gave him a dubious look that had him chucking. “I wasn’t
always sitting behind a desk.”
“Okay, but I won’t be any help. I can’t use my biotics,” she warned him and raised her hands,
showing him the glow. He didn’t understand the importance of her condition, but the itch at the back
of his neck alerted him to danger.
“I’ll wait here unless needed,” he told her when they stopped in front of Chellick’s office.
Pallin leaned up against the wall, waiting as she walked through Chellick’s door.
The door opened,
showing him an empty room. He turned his focus to the human in front of him. She looked annoyed,
his hands glowing brighter.
He stared at her hands curiously, uncertain why they were doing this. He watched her closely as she
exited the room and let the door close behind her. Shepard followed his gaze down to the bright blue
light. She sighed, tucking her hands behind her back, out of sight. “I think I’m going to go home
before someone gets hurt,” she muttered.
Pallin leaned up against the wall, waiting as she walked through Chellick’s door. The door opened,
showing him an empty room. He turned his focus to the human in front of him. She looked annoyed,
his hands glowing brighter.
He stared at her hands curiously, uncertain why they were doing this. He watched her closely as she
exited the room and let the door close behind her. Shepard followed his gaze down to the bright blue
light. She sighed, tucking her hands behind her back, out of sight. “I think I’m going to go home
before someone gets hurt,” she muttered.
Pallin drew himself up to his full height. “Do you need an escort?” he asked, not breaking her gaze;
searching her face carefully.
“No, you are one of the reasons why I should be in my apartment, where no one can get hurt. Right
now I am dangerous,” she stated, nodding respectfully to him before leaving.
Pallin followed her at a distance; old training coming back to him after many years as a bureaucrat.
She walked confidently along the halls, avoiding anyone that came near her. He followed as she took
some stairs, wondering where she was going. He hesitated as she walked to a door, punching in her
code. Her door slid open and he stiffened. He moved quickly, slipping through the door before it
closed. He smelled Chellick’s scent, and it worried him. It was strong, too strong for a mild
confrontation.
Shepard moved toward the couch, and Pallin realized that she didn’t seem to notice Chellick’s scent.
His mandibles went slack as she took off her shirt, not seeing him. He blinked slowly, not sure what
he should do. He was curious about her; he had been for a while. His eyes roamed over her soft skin,
the honed muscles moving as she walked. He found himself wondering what it would be like to bed
her and the very idea shocked him.
Movement from across the room attracted his attention. Chellick stood there staring at her with a
hungry look on his face. He saw Shepard tense, her back stiffening when she noticed Chellick.
“What are you doing here?” she asked coldly, her small hands balled into fists at her side.
Pallin moved further into the shadows, just in case he was needed. If he wasn’t, then he would leave, and no one would ever know he had been in her apartment.

“We need to talk!” Chellick bit out, his anger toward her at an all-time high. She was supposed to be his mate; that was what he wanted, but she had shoved him away. He was still raging at himself for the way he treated her in his office. He had allowed his baser instinct out and she didn’t have a chance against him. He knew her body; knew how to use it to get what he wanted. That was just what he did - made her desire meet his.

“Then talk, but stay the hell over there,” she snapped coldly. Chellick noticed her hands at her side; they glowed blue. A shiver raced through him as he remembered those same glowing hands roving over his body and the pleasure they could give in that state.

Pallin noticed the change in Chellick, the tensing of his muscles. He saw how his eyes were riveted to Shepard’s hands. Pallin moved slowly toward Shepard, wanting to get to her before Chellick did. Chellick noticed movement behind Shepard, and anger roared through him as he saw Pallin. He moved quickly toward the other turian, not thinking about the repercussions of his actions. Pallin stood there braced, waiting for the attack. He knew something wasn’t right with Chellick. It dawned on him too late, and he couldn’t say anything. He would have to wait; he had an enraged turian nearly at his throat. In one quick movement, Pallin had Chellick out cold on Shepard’s floor.

He turned his attention to Shepard. She stood there, a gun pointed toward the unconscious turian. Pallin lifted Chellick and moved him outside of the apartment. Once he stepped back inside he locked the door, placing his own security code into the panel before him. He sent a message to two turians he trusted, giving them the basic details of the situation. Chellick would be well looked after and wouldn’t be a problem for the rest of the night.

Pallin moved toward Shepard, his hands out to the side; showing he meant no harm. “We need to talk. There are a few things that I think you need to be aware of,” Pallin stated, looking down at the half dressed woman.

“What is it?” she asked as she watched Pallin, impressed with what she saw. She would have never guessed that he could move like that.

Pallin looked at her thoughtfully, wondering if he could ask the questions that were plaguing his mind without overstepping his bounds. He decided to take the chance. “How well do you know Chellick?” he asked.

“I know some personal history, though not much. He never talked about his past,” she answered, shrugging her shoulders.

“Overloads?” he asked. He had never heard of anything like that before.

“Since I was humanity’s experiment to see how many times someone could be contaminated with eezo, I have a problem controlling my biotics. During a recent mission, I was in a small warehouse where a large amount of eezo was spilled. I left as soon as I was able to, but my biotics flared to life before I passed out, blowing up the building and I received a large dose of the chemical. For a while I thought my biotics were balancing out, that I would have control; but that’s not what happened,” she explained tiredly.

Pallin listened to the story closely. He had heard stories of what happened to humans that were
exposed to eezo more than once. Some of the stories weren’t pretty; in fact, some of them were downright scary. There were cases of birth defects, humans going insane or dying slowly. There had even been cases of cancer and brain hemorrhages. She was telling him she been exposed at least three times. He couldn’t fathom it. There were only two cases he was familiar with and no names were attached to the files. One was an L2 biotic, supposedly as powerful as an Asari in ways; however, that power came with a price. He would get migraines that would leave him incapacitated for days. The other was a person exposed three times. They were very strong in biotics; no one knew just how powerful the patient was as they always held themselves back.

“So, that is why your hands are glowing right now?” he asked her.

“Yep, but there is nothing I can do right now. I’ll have to wait until my crew and I go up against the enemy,” she said and gave a self-deprecating laugh. Something told him that wasn’t possible. He sat there thinking about what she said. Her eyes flicked to his firm torso, and he wondered. Could he actually be thinking about doing this? He couldn’t believe it himself, but the thought stayed in his mind.

He came to a decision, while a part of his brain told him this was a mistake. He raised a talon, lightly tracing her face; afraid of harming her. Her eyes glanced up at him sharply. He hesitated, not sure what that look in her eyes meant. “Don’t even think about it. I will not go through what I just went through with Chellick,” she bit out, moving back from his hand.

He thought of her words and he knew she didn’t have to worry about that happening to him. Though he wasn’t sure if he wanted to argue the point with her. She was a human; soft and easily injured. He would have to hold himself back. Would that even be pleasurable for him? He opened his mouth to apologize and leave. “I will not ask you to be my mate,” he stated instead; his eyes widening at his words. It was as if his mouth wasn’t listening to what his brain commanded.

Shepard looked at Pallin, not sure what to think of this newest development. She never thought of him in that light. She sat perfectly still, waiting to see what he was going to do next. His words had eased her mind somewhat, but she didn’t want to put up with another addicted turian. That was the last thing she needed; especially one as powerful as Pallin obviously was.

He leaned forward, his claws lacing through her hair. He was sitting there almost too calm. She knew that he was interested, but he was still hesitant; and that was fine with her. She didn’t move from her spot, even when he placed pressure on her head. “I am still not using you for my overload,” she bit out.

Pallin hesitated for a moment, her words barely registering. He had been so absorbed in her eyes. How they turned from a bright green to a darker shade in mere moments. He leaned into her, his tongue flicking out to take a deeper scent of her. “Biotics don’t affect me,” he murmured close to her face, his voice almost coming out as a purr.

“Pallin, you don’t know what you are asking for,” she told him softly. He had made this conversation soft, coaxing. She was hesitant to break the moment between them.

“Let me be the judge of that,” he purred, leaning closer to her. He flicked his tongue out to taste her skin. She tasted salty and sweet at the same time. He wasn’t used to progressing this slowly, but something about it actually excited him. He could feel his plates shift minutely.

She closed the gap between their faces. He hesitated, unsure what she was going to do. Her small tongue licked the length of his mandible. Unexpected pleasure ran through him; he didn’t think humans knew about that pleasure zone. Though he shouldn’t have been surprised; she’d been with a turian for the past few months.

A part of him still worried. He’d been with asari, but they were different; they could give you pleasure with their minds. Humans didn’t have that advantage. She backed up and stared at him with challenging eyes, her mouth curved into a smirk. She leaned in once more, her eyes never leaving his. She placed a glowing blue hand on the sensitive skin beneath his fringe and licked his mandible at the same time. Pleasure shot through him and he rumbled low as his plates almost completely shifted. Her short nails dug into the skin and he growled, expressing his pleasure. Desire coursed through him at her touch.

He reached out toward her and she smirked, moving away from his hand. There was a challenging
look in her eyes as he reached for her again. She stood up from the couch, and moved past him. Desire slammed into him at the look of defiance on her face. She wasn’t going to give in easily; not like he had thought she would. She moved deeper into her apartment, stopping before an open doorway.

Pallin left the couch for the chase she was offering. He moved quickly past the furniture into a bedroom. She was standing on the opposite side of the bed with the challenge still in her eyes. She bared her teeth at him, her small tongue running over them. Lust flared in him and his plates fully shifted. He would never have guessed that being with a human would be this erotic.

She jumped onto the bed, walking toward him. Without warning she leapt onto him, her legs automatically locking around his sensitive waist; her small hands grasping his fringe tightly. He gave a rumbling purr as she shifted, creating more friction against his waist. The thin clothes he had on didn’t help to protect him, as he felt ever motion of her body.

He felt her legs tighten as she raised herself up so they were face to face. His mandibles were slack with pleasure; her mouth enveloped one of them and sucked. He roared as lust ripped through him. He threw her onto the bed, quickly shedding his clothes as she did the same.

He moved toward her on the bed, treating her like an asari. His hands glided over her smooth skin, and he loved the way she would squirm or buck beneath his talons. His tongue followed his hands, coming to the one place he was uncertain of; a place he didn’t really like the taste of on an asari. He usually had to get treatments for allergic reactions after each encounter. His eyes widened as Shepard passed him a small pill; he didn’t have to ask what it was for.

He licked her, testing. She was sweet and soft. He lost himself in her musky scent and taste. He heard her go over the edge once, her biotics flowing over them. He fought his body not lose control; he wanted to be within her when he did.

He moved to his knees, positioning himself over her. In one smooth stroke, he sheathed himself within her. Her biotics flared to life, washing over them both in a soothing light that enhanced their pleasure. Instinct over took them both; her teeth and nails bit into his hard skin, while his teeth nipped at her, holding her in place when he found his release.

He rolled off to the side, looking to see how much damage he had done. There were some bruises and a few teeth marks, but that was all. He didn’t harm her too greatly. She looked at him with sated eyes that slowly drifted close. He thought about returning to his apartment, but that would leave her door unlocked. It was a delicate balance between her safety and their emotions. He decided to stay.

~oooooooo~

Pallin woke first or so he thought until Shepard’s eyes snapped open, fully alert. She smirked at him, leaving the bed. Pallin’s eyes widened; she didn’t seem annoyed that he had spent the night. He dressed and joined her in the kitchen. He wasn’t sure if they should make this a one night stand or leave it open-ended. Not a true relationship, but a place to go to fulfill their needs whenever they both chose.

“You’re thinking too hard,” she muttered, giving him a curious look.

“I am wondering where we go from here,” he told her, watching her reaction closely.

“Whatever works for you; I will be gone for a while,” she told him with a shrug. He could see it really didn’t matter to her. He had been worried about how she would react when she woke, and if she was the type of woman that wanted sweet words after sex. He didn’t have those for her; nor would he ever give them to someone who wasn’t his mate.

“Oh, before you go, you might want to grab a shower,” she told him. He smelled the air, and his brow ridge raised in alarm; he could taste blood. He hadn’t thought he had harmed her. “Relax, you didn’t harm me. It’s something human females go through once a month,” she explained with a grimace.

Pallin walked over to her bathroom as she contacted her ship, asking if all the cargo was on board. The doors closed before he heard the answer. That gave him a small idea of her. Even though she just woke, she was working. He could appreciate that side of her.

~oooooooo~
The Turian Councilor looked over all the information he had on Commander Shepard, their newest Spectre. He was impressed with what he had read so far. She was one of humanity’s more powerful biotics. She had been exposed to eezo twice purposefully and twice accidentally; one of those times just recently. She single handedly repelled an attack of batarian slavers on Elysium, saving countless lives. Her hand to hand experience without the use of biotics wasn’t very impressive for the hero of Elysium; though with biotics, she could put her hand through a metal wall. Her marksmanship was better than average, but she was still not the top of her class. It was her biotics and her way with people that made her unique.

He scanned more of her service record. She served with a human captain shortly after Elysium who ordered his ground squad to die so he could finish a mission faster. She had stopped him, almost killing him in the process. She’d served with two other captains that were less than ideal, placing themselves before their crew. She had high recommendations from other officials, including one from Executor Pallin. Why Pallin had written a recommendation, he wasn’t sure. Three different captains with sterling reputations spoke very highly of her.

The rumors he had heard of her raised his brow. He had instructed one of his subordinates to find out more information about her; rumors, anything they could find. The information he received shocked him somewhat. Chellick wasn’t the only turian to have been involved with Shepard. There were two others, one very recently. According to the information he received, she had been with Garrus Vakarian, the C-Sec officer ordered to investigate Shepard’s claims against Saren. He found out that their dalliance had been caused by drugs. The second was Nihlus; not that this information surprised the Councilor in the least.

As he read on, he could see why the humans wanted her as a Spectre; she was the best they had. He tapped his desk as he thought of his plans for her. The idea came to him after his last meeting with her. At first he wasn’t sure about it; but the more he thought of the idea, the more he liked it. He knew it wouldn’t be easy to implement, but they needed her. If the Council could control Shepard, mold her into what they wanted, they would have a powerful advantage over the humans.

He wasn’t sure how he would go about this, nor had he spoken with the other Councilors. He would address the matter with them, once his plan was set in motion. He finally had a way to keep humans in their place, if he made the right decisions. He knew Shepard even agreed that humans were progressing too fast in some areas. She agreed that certain humans shouldn’t be allowed any more power than they already had.

He thought about the different strategies he could use with Shepard, but the one that would work the fastest made his skin crawl at the moment. He knew for this to work he would have to gain her trust, but how to go about that was puzzling. His distrust for humans was well known; she would be unsure of his sincerity if he moved too fast.

He needed to think more about this before putting his ideas into motion. While she was on her mission, he would contact her and start the process. He thought about it a moment more and decided swaying Shepard to the Council’s side was in the best interest of all concerned.
Chapter 10

Shepard boarded the Normandy, taking in her new ship. It was odd calling this ‘her’ ship now. The state of the art vessel was under her control now; with a turian, a quarian and a krogan on board. No other ship could boast of that. She wondered how many problems this would create, since it was designed for a human Alliance crew. She walked over to Joker and asked him to connect her to the ship wide communications system. She spent the next few minutes giving her speech to the crew, informing them of the seriousness of their mission.

“So, where to, Commander?” he asked, looking at her expectantly.

“Let’s go pick up Liara T’Soni,” she grinned.

“Will do. It’ll take a few days to get there,” he commented, before turning back to his controls.

Shepard left the area, heading for the next deck. She was going to make the rounds to see how the crew was doing. The Mess Hall was busy; Kaidan sat with Garrus eating a high protein meal. Shepard walked over to them with her food, taking a seat.

“So, where are we heading to, Commander?” Kaidan asked.

“We’re going to pick up Liara T’Soni,” she answered with a smirk. “So, who’s looking after the Mako?” she asked them.

“I am, why?” Garrus answered, looking at her curiously.

“Well I’m driving and a Mako was not meant to be babied,” she stated with a grin. It had been awhile since she had driven one, but she couldn’t wait to do it again. She remembered the last time she had been in one; the crew she was with hadn’t talk to her for a few days afterward.

“In other words, I can see a lot of repairs in my future?” Garrus asked with a smirk. He watched her for a few moments as she sat there, completely relaxed. He couldn’t help his thoughts with her this close, though he tried to hide them.

“Probably, though if you need a hand fixing the Mako, let me know and I can help,” she told him. His thoughts shifted to an area he was trying to avoid - Shepard lying on the floor next to him while they worked on the Mako.

Kaidan watched her for a moment, keeping his opinion to himself. He had heard about her driving skill and it hadn’t been flattering. He remembered speaking to fellow Alliance officers that had served under her at one time or another. They told horror stories of her driving. He didn’t relish being in the Mako while she was driving, though he highly doubted he would be in attendance. She was a biotic as was he, so she really had no use for him. Therefore, he didn’t anticipate much time off-ship.

Shepard ate the meal she had grabbed as her companions sat there quietly. She watched them both, looking for any sign that there would be a problem. But she didn’t see any. She wondered how Wrex and Tali were getting along among all the humans. The silence at the table was so palpable that it began getting on her nerves. She glanced around the Mess Hall, noticing some baleful glares from the crew directed at Garrus. Those were going to be stopped and soon, she thought sourly as she memorized each face.

She finished her plate. “Anyway, I need to make the rounds and see how everything else is going,” she muttered, leaving the table.

Garrus watched her leave, his focus solely on her; forgetting about the human he was sitting with. He forced him to ignore the memories of their night together. A clearing of a throat broke him out of his thoughts. Garrus flicked his gaze back to the human sitting before him.

Kaidan silently snickered as he watched the turian gazing after Shepard. Before he would have stepped in, but now he knew he wouldn’t. He finally realized after the episode with Nihlus that he wasn’t against human and alien relationships; though it wasn’t something he would try, himself. He didn’t hate aliens. He just didn’t see them in that light. He decided to take pity on the confused turian.

“I was telling you to make sure you have the shocks and struts top notch, because if Shepard is driving they’ll probably be taking a lot of abuse,” he told him, hiding his smirk.

“Thanks for the warning,” Garrus muttered, slightly embarrassed. He left the table in a hurry. Kaidan
smiled as he watched him walk away.

Kaidan wasn’t sure what he felt about fraternization on an Alliance vessel. He knew it was frowned upon; the Alliance was very strict on that subject. But the Commander was a Spectre and the turian wasn’t part of the Alliance, so they didn’t necessarily fall under the same rules.

Garrus walked down to the Mako where he could lose himself in work. He needed something to occupy his mind. He needed to focus on this mission, not the Commander. She wouldn’t appreciate it in the least. Plus, she was already taken by Chellick. His scent was still on her, though not as strong as it had once been. Garrus found this to be particularly confusing. His scent should have been stronger, unless Shepard had been telling the truth and she had ended things between them.

He took the elevator to the lower levels. Wrex was working on his guns, while the female human was working on everyone else’s guns. Cleaning and repairing those that needed it. He walked over to the Mako, staying away from her. He knew from talks with other crew members that she had a problem with aliens, especially turians.

He moved himself beneath the Mako, checking out everything before he touched any of it.

Shepard headed into her quarters. It was larger than any other sleeping space on the vessel and doubled as her office. She noticed paper work waiting for her and raised a brow. They had just left dock and she had paper work waiting for her! Most of the forms were receipts for the orders she had placed, showing that Udina’s and Pallin’s office covered the cost. There was a large delivery of food for her alien crew members and extra parts for the Mako and their weapons.

She checked her computer, looking to see if Captain Anderson left any messages for her. She filed the paper work, signing off on each one. She looked around for more to do, but with this being her first day, there was nothing left.

She was about to leave when Joker interrupted her; his voice coming over the intercom.

“Commander, you have an incoming message from the Council,” he said.

“Can you patch it through to my office?” she asked. She wasn’t sure if that was possible.

“Will do, Commander,” Joker told her.

“Thank you Joker,” she said and smirked as she heard the Turian Councilor’s voice. Why was she not surprised? She wouldn’t have been shocked if he situated himself on the ship to make sure that they did the job correctly.

“Councilor,” she said politely to the small holo image floating on her desk.

“Shepard, I heard you left the Citadel late,” he commented, waiting for her answer. This was going to be his first of many attempts at gaining her trust. If it didn’t happen after the next one, he would probably give up. Thinking this plan through had been good, until he saw her sitting there. Now he didn’t know how to start or what to do. He had it all planned out, but something told him that what he had planned wouldn’t work with her. Her eyes were too calculating as she watched him.

“Yes, the final shipment of goods wasn’t delivered until late. So, I gave the crew one last night to sleep in regular beds if they wished,” she told him, waiting for his harsh reprimand.

“Seems reasonable,” he told her, shrugging off his irritation that she would actually think of her crew. He was slightly shocked; though after reading her file, he shouldn’t have been. “I had some people look for more information on Benezia and her daughter, Liara T’Soni. Some interesting facts came to our attention. I’m sending you the file for you to peruse at your convenience. If I come across something else, we’ll forward it to you,” he told her. She was expecting harshness in his tone, or at least sarcasm. She was pleasantly surprised to find him talking to her normally.

“Actually this came at the perfect time. We are going after Liara T’Soni first. I want to find out what she knows, and her knowledge of the Protheans could be invaluable. Particularly since it was a Prothean beacon that started all this,” she muttered.

The Turian Councilor watched her for a moment, pleased that there hadn’t been any argument between the two of them. She seemed to honestly appreciate his help and that fact made him wonder. He could still read distrust from her as he was sure she could see it from him. “I’ve also added my personal extranet address so you won’t have to worry about going through the secretary. Leave an email and I’ll contact you,” he told her. This part made him nervous – giving Shepard his personal address. He only hoped she didn’t abuse it.
“Thank you, Councilor,” she replied, nodding respectfully toward him.
“One more thing, Shepard. As soon as you finish your mission, I would see you back on the Citadel,” he ordered. She raised a brow at his tone, but said nothing about it. The Councilor cut communications with a final ‘good luck’. It was more than she was expecting from him.

“Commander, we are heading through the relay now,” Joker informed her.
“I’ll be on the bridge shortly,” she told him. Joker smirked. He knew that meant wait for her. She was the only person that stood behind him, watching as they went through the relay. At first he thought she was checking to make sure he did his job, but he soon found out that wasn’t it at all. She enjoyed watching. When she first boarded the Normandy, he had been nervous. He had heard the rumors that she didn’t like humanity, but he didn’t see that. He saw a Commander, a natural leader.

~oooooooo~

The Normandy orbited a planet named Therum, located in the Knossos system of the Artemis Tau cluster. This was the last known location of Dr. Liara T’Soni. The Turian Councilor’s information had been invaluable to Shepard. She was shocked to discover that Liara hadn’t talked to her mother in many years. Though Dr. T’Soni’s dossier was impressive, it was Benezia that piqued her interest. She was a Matriarch, which made her one of the most powerful and highly respected members of asari society.

“Joker, are our scans showing anything?” she asked him.
“There is some activity, but it’s unclear as to what it is,” he answered her.

“Have Kaidan and Garrus meet me at the Mako,” she ordered before leaving. She didn’t need to stand over his shoulder to make sure that he would carry out the order.

She went to the lower deck where Kaidan was putting on his armor. Garrus was already dressed and ready to go. Shepard stared at him, realizing that she rarely saw him without full armor. She stripped out of her shirt and pants without thought; leaving her in a light tank-top and high cut underwear. She dressed in her armor, thinking nothing about the others around her. It was normal for humans on a ship to suit up in the open. She had just finished with the final clasp when she became alerted to someone watching her. She glanced around; Kaidan and Ashley were busy with his guns, and Wrex was cleaning his weapons. When her eyes turned to the last person, she found Garrus’ gaze focused on her. She couldn’t read the look in his eyes; she had never seen that look.

Garrus’ jaw almost dropped when he saw Shepard stripping in the middle of the cargo area. His eyes widened further as her pants came off, leaving her with barely anything on. Flashes of their night on the Citadel came to him - his hands on her soft skin and the sounds she made as he moved within her. He remembered the feel of her bottom pressing against him as she met each of his powerful thrusts. He felt his plates starting to shift, and he fought the moan that came unbidden from his chest. He had to think of something else and quick, if only to be able to concentrate on the mission. His mind conjured various images as her eyes clashed with his. He thought of a naked Elcor, but that didn’t work; it had Shepard’s face. He gave up trying to think of anything once his plates were fully shifted.

She and Kaidan walked over to the Mako. Garrus was thankful that he was wearing armor so they wouldn’t notice his predicament. “Everything ok, Garrus?” she asked as she stood next to him at the door of the Mako.

He didn’t trust his voice enough to answer, so he simply nodded. She motioned for him to enter before she jumped into the driver’s seat. The Cargo Bay was cleared just before the bay doors opened.

Shepard revved the engine, barreling out the Normandy for the plummet to the ground. This was the best part; the exhilarating part. The sense of falling; knowing that if you have a good driver, you were safe. If you had a lousy driver, you might as well kiss your ass goodbye.

Garrus wasn’t sure what Shepard driving skills were. He hadn’t opened his eyes long enough to see. As soon as he saw her barreling toward an open lava pit, he closed his eyes and prayed to the spirits.

“Hey Garrus, you want to take the gun anytime soon?” Shepard’s irate voice cut through his prayers. His eyes snapped open to see geth assembling in front of them. Without thinking, he went for the guns. Kaidan moved up to the front, watching the shields.
He had to admit she was good, if dangerous. She wasn’t shy of running things over or driving up the side of a mountain so they were out of the line of fire. She made his job easier. She always slowed when they came to a closed covered bridge; staying out of reach of their fire, but still close enough that he could hit them. It was the lava streams that were his main problem. She nearly landed in them a few times.

She stopped the Mako suddenly. “End of the line, boys,” she grinned, jumping out.

“How good are your sniping skills, Garrus?” she asked, and he remembered that she hadn’t seen him in action with the sniper rifle yet.

“I hit what I shoot at,” he answered, trying not to sound cocky. He knew he failed in that attempt.

“That’s right. How could I possibly forget?” she said, looking at him with a knowing smirk. Garrus felt like he was burning; he knew his normal color darkened from embarrassment. The images those words conjured wouldn’t help him on this mission. He really needed to think about something else and quickly.

Kaidan watched the two and knew he missed something; the tension between them skyrocketed in moments. He watched the Commander walk away and Garrus following her with his eyes. If this kept up, they were going to get killed.

He hit the turian’s chest, getting his attention; ignoring the scowl Garrus threw at him. “Are you coming?” Kaidan asked irritably.

Kaidan started walking away, listening to Garrus mutter. He wasn’t sure if he heard right, but he thought he heard the turian mutter “not if I can help it.”

Garrus snarled at himself, pissed that he had lost focus right in the middle of a mission. Their lives were at stake and he was fantasizing about the Commander. He knew then as soon as they went to the Citadel he would be stopping at Chora’s Den. He stormed over to Shepard’s side. She glanced at him questioningly but shrugged it off when he didn’t comment.

Garrus shook his head sadly. What was he supposed to say? Sorry, Shepard but I was remembering that time we had together? He didn’t fucking think so.

“Garrus, I need you to take position over there. Snipe anything you can. Kaidan, you’re with me,” Shepard ordered. Instantly she let her walls down, allowing her biotics to wash over her.

Garrus watched, memorized by the Commander. Her body was washed in a blue light, and her eyes blazed brightly. She lifted a hand toward the enemy, shoving them into a boulder. He took his place and started sniping; covering both Kaidan and Shepard as they made their way forward.

Shepard ran to another spot and he took a moment, watching as she lifted two geth high in the air. Quickly he took aim at them - two shots, two geth down. She looked at him and nodded. Quickly he moved to a better position and he could see why she was hesitating. Three of the geth before them had shields that needed to be taken down before her attacks would be effective. Kaidan would take the shields down, she would lift them and he would fire.

They moved into a routine. Soon the area seemed to be clear, until Shepard pointed to the top of a nearby hill. He searched the area, finding more geth. He quickly disabled all but the last two. He couldn’t reach them. He couldn’t get a clear shot from his current position and he didn’t see any place to go that would be better. “There are more up there, but we can’t get them from here,” he told her over the comm.

“Okay, regroup on my position,” she ordered. Kaidan moved low just in case. Garrus moved, not bothering to crouch. He scoped the hill again, finding the ones that he had missed; taking them out quickly before they moved again. Shepard gave the go ahead and moved on in the lead. Garrus followed right behind her, keeping a close watch on the area. He noticed that Shepard was cautious, but not overly so; she would hesitate every now and then to carefully check her surroundings.

After watching her here, he knew if she had fought at Chora’s Den, it would have been too easy. She was right to use that as a test. She could have cleared the room on her own. Garrus switched weapons when she nodded toward him. She held up five fingers; he wasn’t sure what that meant, but he assumed that there were five more Geth somewhere nearby.

She pointed toward an indentation in the rocks where he could take cover. So, she wanted to use him as bait to flush them out. He wasn’t sure about this technique, as he had never done something like
this before. It required him to trust his life to the hands of someone that he barely knew. Sure he had memories of their time together, but that wasn’t enough for trust of this type; where his life literally rested in her hands.

He hid in the outcrop with barely time to spare. He knew he was a sitting duck; if they didn’t back him up, he was dead. He started to take the first shot, but stopped as the group of geth went flying away from him. He looked toward Shepard. She was standing up, her eyes glowing blue; along with the rest of her. She stood alone, perfectly still. Something told him that he had missed a crucial moment.

He walked over to Kaidan, who was shaking his head at Shepard. “You do realize that you are going to be exhausted after this mission,” he muttered to the Commander.

“Better exhausted than overloaded,” she snapped. Her voice wasn’t cold, but annoyed. “True, I hadn’t thought of that. You better have a hearty meal when we get back. You’re going to be drained. Actually, I would suggest you snack on something now,” Kaidan told her firmly, passing her a protein bar.

“Yes, doctor,” she grumbled with a smirk, taking the bar and tearing the package open. Kaidan chuckled, shaking his head. He glanced at Garrus, who was watching them curiously. Shepard finished the bar in record time; she didn’t even taste it. She hadn’t told Kaidan, but her last display of biotic power had drained her more than she thought it would. It had been a while since she’d used Shove without anger behind it, so that all five geth went flying.

“Ready whenever the two of you are,” she told them, rising to her feet; hoping they were close to the illustrious Liara T’Soni.

Shepard motioned for Garrus to take the lead. He nodded, still wondering what the ‘overload’ conversation was about, and why Kaidan had paled when she mentioned it. He glanced back at his new Commander. She looked normal now - green eyes, her body no longer glowing. She was the first biotic he had known other than asari who could make their bodies glow like that. They walked toward a group of buildings in the distance. Shepard stopped them, looking around carefully. “Something’s not right here. I don’t like this,” she muttered.

“What is it, Shepard?” Garrus asked. Something in her tone concerned him.

“I don’t know, trap maybe. Keep your guard up and expect the unexpected,” she warned them, taking the lead.

They walked further into the abandoned mine; surrounded by a storage shed and what appeared to be the dig site. “Oh, fuck!” she shouted when she saw the geth drop ship. Garrus and Kaidan followed her gaze. Their eyes widened and they quickly took cover.

“Shit, it’s a geth armature. They have nasty fire power,” Kaidan muttered, looking at his omnitool. “Great, this is a first for me on foot. We need to take down the rest before we go up against that thing,” Shepard told them. She was about to add more, but Garrus opened fire and something dropped in front of her. The thing had four legs and a lithe, lean body. Well, what do you know? She was meeting all kinds of nasty things today.

“Damn Garrus, could have warned me you were inviting a friend,” she joked, looking down at the creature in disgust.

“Didn’t want to take you away from your other guests,” he smirked. She chuckled, turning back to their other “guests” and threw a few of them away from the party. Kaidan did the same, and Garrus shot the stragglers. Soon enough they were down to only the armature. Shepard sighed in relief.

“Kaidan, I want you to run to those crates over there. Once there, stay hidden until I give the signal. I want you to disrupt its shield while we try and take it down. Use your biotics and hide again,” she explained. If he didn’t follow her instructions, they were all in the shits. He nodded his head and waited until the armature quit firing. Shepard caught the armature’s attention, trying to give Kaidan enough time to get prepared.

Kaidan watched the Commander, waiting for her signal. He knew he had to wait until her biotics recharged. He just hoped she knew what she was doing. She gave the signal right after it finished firing. He used his biotics, taking down its shields some. Garrus shot at it and they all took cover when it started firing. They continued using the strategy until the armature finally collapsed.
Garrus and Kaidan were impressed that her plan worked so well. She was a quick thinker; able to judge the field and come up with a plan that included the team. They followed her down into the old mines, where she stopped for a moment, listening. “We’ve got company,” she muttered. They automatically went into combat mode. Garrus picked off two husks that rushed toward them, and Kaidan took the last one.

Shepard smirked when she realized that there were no enemies left for her. She didn’t care; she needed the break and maybe another protein bar. She was about to ask Kaidan for one, but either he had a gift for reading minds or she had given some clue. He passed her two of them that she devoured within moments. They helped a lot, but she was still feeling drained. She didn’t understand it. She’d used her biotics this much before, but she had never been this drained. Then it came to her—she hadn’t eaten today. Stupid her!

They made it to the first elevator with barely any difficulties. The second elevator gave them all a moment’s pause as it trembled and shook and then fell; finally coming to a stop. The walkway before them collapsed from the hard impact of the elevator. “Remind me not to take my vacation here,” Shepard muttered with a grin. Kaidan and Garrus chuckled behind her.

They walked down the gangway, and Shepard noticed some geth on the ground floor. She fired a few shots, but they were ineffective at this distance. “Garrus, you’re up,” Shepard stated, moving out of the way. Garrus took the shots, dropping every enemy in sight. “Kaidan, get ready, there are more down there that we can’t see,” she told him.

They moved quickly down the walkway, ready for the inevitable attack. Garrus took out the first two, while Shepard and Kaidan lifted those that were behind cover. Garrus pegged them off as they were in the air. Shepard was impressed; they were starting to read each other without having to be led in any particular direction.

They cleared out the area and stopped to regroup. Kaidan started to pass her another bar. “No, we need to save them. We don’t know what’s left in this place,” Shepard muttered, panting. “Don’t worry. I heard that you go through these like candy. Anderson warned me about that the first time we touched down on a planet,” Kaidan smirked, passing her the bar. She devoured it like the others.

Well, at least he was better prepared than her. She hadn’t even thought about this stuff. Her main concern was weapons, ammo, omnigel and medigel. She hadn’t even thought about food or protein bars.

They continued walking, heading toward an asari suspended in some type of force field. Shepard rolled her eyes, wondering how the young woman had gotten herself in this position. She wasn’t going to ask; she knew this one had a long story behind it. “What did she do to get herself stuck like that?” Kaidan muttered.

Liara looked over her shoulder awkwardly. “Is someone there?” she called out, relief in her eyes from what Shepard could see.

“Yeah, we are here to get you, Dr. T’Soni,” Shepard told her. Now all she had to do was figure out how to complete that task. “You two scout around for something that might take this barrier down,” she ordered. They both looked at her dubiously. She didn’t blame them, but they did it, nonetheless. They didn’t question aloud or argue with her.

They came back a few moments later. “The only thing we found, and I highly doubt it would work, is a mining drill,” Kaidan said.

Shepard looked at the ground then back at the field, doing calculations in her mind; measuring distance and trajectory. “Show me where this drill is,” she commanded, following them. It wasn’t far away. She did more computations and nodded slowly. “Actually, this might work, if my calculations are right.” She opened the panel and punched in a sequence of codes. When that didn’t work, she used her omnigel. The drill fired to life. A laser cut through the ground, leaving a large hole below the chamber that housed the trapped asari. Shepard smirked as she led the way. She had hoped the laser would work, but she hadn’t been positive that it would.

Garrus raised a brow ridge, impressed. He would ask her later how she knew this was here. Kaidan watched the Commander, questions in his eyes. “Commander, how did…” Kaidan didn’t get to
finish when Shepard’s laughing eyes turned to him.  
“I didn’t. I knew it would drill a hole below it, but I didn’t know this was here. So, I guess lady luck is on our side today,” she grinned. Garrus tried to do what he had seen humans do numerous times; he rolled his eyes at her. Her grin got bigger as she silently laughed at them. She couldn’t believe they thought she had planned this.  
They walked up to a panel, and Shepard punched in a code to start the elevator. She wasn’t sure how she knew the correct combination, but it all seemed to make sense to her. “Shepard, are you sure you know what you are doing?” Garrus asked worriedly.  
“Yeah, I know what I am doing. I can understand some of these symbols,” she told them. They could hear the confusion in her voice, but they watched as she shrugged it off.  
The lift they were on rose to the level where Liara was trapped. Shepard looked at the woman now facing them. She would recognize her anywhere after seeing the picture that the Turian Councilor had sent her. She walked over to the control panel next to her and punched in a few buttons. Liara dropped to the ground. Shepard nodded to Kaidan and Garrus, who automatically drew their weapons.  
“Liara T’Soni? We are here to collect you. We need your knowledge of the Protheans, and any knowledge you may have as to your mother’s location,” Shepard told her in a firm, cold voice.  
Kaidan glanced at Garrus with a raised brow. Shepard had been friendly, even jovial up to this point. Now she was a person you didn’t want to cross.  
“There is not much I can tell you about my mother,” Liara told them, her eyes never leaving the woman standing before her. She radiated danger. Liara could see the biotic energy streaming from her. She had never seen anything like it in a human. The male human had strong biotic powers, but nothing compared to this woman.  
“You’re nervous. What are you hiding?” the woman asked. Liara’s eyes widened. She was either very good at reading body language or she could read energies like asari. She wasn’t sure which was scarier. The woman watched her, her eyes cold and Liara didn’t know how to answer her question. She wasn’t exactly hiding anything; it was more of her reading of the woman. “Answer me or I will leave you on this planet. I will know if you lie!” Shepard snapped coolly. Liara’s eyes widened more as those words answered her question. This human could see energies.  
“For a human, you have the strongest energy I have seen from your species. I’m not hiding anything, but what I saw from you,” Liara answered hastily. Shepard nodded, believing the woman. She wasn’t giving any of the normal signs that she was lying and Shepard’s bullshit radar wasn’t going off.  
The ground trembled beneath them, and all their eyes widened as dirt and debris fell around them. Shepard was about to give the order to run, but stopped when a krogan and his mercenaries came out of nowhere. Everyone ran for cover except Shepard; she went after the krogan. She used her biotics to strengthen her. She ducked and dodged his hits, remembering Nihlus’ teaching. She used his techniques as best she as could. She was scared; what little energy she had was wearing out fast. Hence why she didn’t do something like she did to Wrex on their first meeting. She had to hold out until the others were finished with his buddies.  
“ Shepard, get out of there!” she heard Garrus yell. She flipped backward, out of reach of the krogan; or so she thought. Unfortunately, she hadn’t moved far enough. A large fist struck out, sending her flying across the room. Two people opened fire, and Liara used her biotics, taking out the krogan. It didn’t take them long; Shepard was just stumbling to her feet as the mercenary fell. She could feel her biotics trying to heal her, but that wasn’t good; her arm was dislocated.  
Garrus watched the Commander worriedly. He had seen the krogan hit her and wanted to run to her side, but he knew that would only place them in danger. He sighed with relief when she moved to her feet, but she was favoring one arm. It was hanging by her side at an odd angle.  
“We have to get out of here now!” she snapped, running to the panel; hoping it would take them to a higher level. Shepard sighed in relief as it did. She made sure she was the last one off the platform, running behind everyone else in case one of them fell. She would be the one to help; she was the leader and leaders always went last, protecting their crew. She yelled at them to run as things
collapsed around them, the walkway behind them falling into lava. Shepard ran for all she was worth, praying to anyone listening that they would get out of this alive.

She ran toward the light up ahead; Garrus, Kaidan and Liara were already outside. She nearly collapsed on the ramp, but strong hands held her up. She glanced up to see Garrus right beside her, taking her arm as they ran. She was thankful it wasn’t her injured arm.

The Normandy wasn’t far away and the doors were open for them. They ran for it, slamming the doors shut after them. Shepard stood there, panting in pain. “You should get Chakwas to look at your arm, Shepard,” Kaidan stated as they waited for the decontamination to finish.

“Yeah, she’s going to have to reset it,” Shepard grimaced. That’s going to hurt like a son of bitch, she thought to herself. “Kaidan, while I am with the doc, set up a place where Liara can stay for the time being,” she ordered with a pointed look. Kaidan nodded slowly as he led the asari out of the room. Shepard knew he would take care of getting a guard for the girl. She didn’t trust her enough to allow her to go about the ship freely. She was Benezia’s daughter, someone who was working for Saren.

Shepard walked toward the Med Bay, shocked when Garrus followed her. He walked into the office with her. “What?” Shepard asked heatedly.

“Just making sure you were actually coming here,” he smirked, before leaving. Doctor Chakwas laughed as Shepard scowled at his back.

“He hasn’t been aboard very long, and has only been on one mission with you. Yet, he already knows you’ll try and dodge me,” the doctor said, shaking her head in amusement.

“Yes, whatever. Can you set my arm?” Shepard asked. The doctor walked over and scanned her arm; her eyes widening when she read the scan. Shepard’s arm was already partially healed, but still dislocated. She knew this was going to hurt, but she couldn’t knock her out. That was when her biotics flared the worst. She saw understanding in Shepard’s eyes and hoped she passed out before she was finished. She knew as soon as she moved the arm, she would be ripping the muscles, ligaments and cartilage that had already partially healed in the wrong position.

Garrus sat at one of the tables, waiting to talk to Shepard. He watched in confusion as Kaidan ordered everyone to leave the area and head back to their stations. He walked over to Garrus. “You should leave too, Garrus. You don’t want to hear what comes next,” Kaidan told him. Garrus stared at him, not understanding what he was talking about.

A blood curdling scream ripped through the room, and the blood drained from Garrus’ face. “What the hell is she doing to her?” Garrus demanded.

“Shepard can’t be sedated unless it’s for dire circumstances. Her biotics flare out of control and it’s very dangerous. Shepard dislocated her shoulder down there. Her biotics were healing her without her arm being set properly. So the doctor has to rip through the partial heal to reset it. She’ll be fine in a few moments; hopefully she’ll pass out, though I highly doubt it,” Kaidan explained to him. The cry of pain stopped. Garrus took a relieved breath as his body started relaxing once again.

Doctor Chakwas left the Medical Bay, her face pale. She glanced around, noticing only the turian and Kaidan there. “Can one of you move her to her room? She will be in better spirits if she doesn’t wake in there,” the doctor smirked. She remembered one of the times the Commander had woken in the Med Bay and didn’t need a repeat.

Garrus waited for Kaidan to offer, and he glanced at the human when no answer came from him. Kaidan was staring at him expectantly. Garrus shrugged and followed the doctor. Shepard lay on the bed in only her underwear and tank top. Garrus tried not to stare; after all, she was his commanding officer. He moved closer to her, gently picking her up in his arms. He just hoped no one was around when he carried her to her room.

“You’ll need this to wake her, just move it under her nose until she wakes,” the doctor told him, passing him a packet. He couldn’t get over how light she was, how slight she felt. He could feel the muscles beneath her smooth skin, and he stared into her face as he walked into her room. She wasn’t pale, but there were dark circles beneath her eyes.

He took the packet, hesitant about waking her up; but that was what the doctor wanted. Outside Kaidan was getting a plate ready for Shepard. Doctor Chakwas was standing beside him, listening to
his account of the mission. He told the doctor about Garrus’ lack of concentration early on. The duo looked at each other, exchanging amused smiles. They glanced toward Shepard’s door when they heard it open. Garrus stood there with a smirk as he walked over to the counter of food. “Here, this is for the Commander,” Kaidan told him, passing him a plate filled with food. His eyes widened as he saw the amount of food on it. “She needs at least this much or more,” Kaidan told him, trying to hide his amusement. Garrus shrugged, walking back into Shepard’s room. He moved over to the bed where Shepard was laying. She looked his way, her eyes lighting up when she smelled the food. “If you keep eating like this, you’ll have to restock,” Garrus joked, trying to ease the tension in his body. “Where is your plate?” she asked with annoyance. “I didn’t grab myself one. I’ll eat later,” he told her. He didn’t think she was ready to see a turian eat, some people found it disturbing. Then he remembered she had been with Chellick, so she must have seen him eat a few times. “Go grab a plate. I hate eating alone,” she muttered. Garrus hid his smile as he left the Commander’s side. He had to start thinking of her as ‘Commander’, not the woman that he had one night of drugged-up sex with. Not that he would ever forget that night. He walked back into the room. She was sitting up on the bed, her legs crossed. Garrus tried not to stare as she sat there. His eyes started at her feet, slowly traveling up her body. He swallowed nervously; he knew this trip was going to be hell if this kept up. He met her smiling green eyes, not sure what he should say. “Are you going to sit and eat?” she asked with a raised brow. “You should be resting,” Garrus reminded her. “Don’t have time to rest. I need to meet with Liara and the rest of the team to make sure everyone is up to date. Then I need to write my report before talking to the Council and then contact them. And to end my day, I need to talk to the Turian Councilor,” she sighed, rolling her eyes. He smirked as her list grew longer. “So, how are you going to type your report with your shoulder out?” Garrus asked her. “Very slowly if I was typing,” she drawled sarcastically. “But I’ll be doing video,” she told him. Garrus raised a brow ridge, amused by her attitude. Shepard glanced down at her empty plate, shocked. She didn’t remember eating it all. Garrus moved toward her, taking her plate and placing it with his empty one. He started heading for the door when Shepard’s voice stopped him. “Hey, Garrus, can you do me a favor?” “Sure,” he answered automatically. “Have Joker take us to the Citadel and have him page the crew in one hour for a meeting in the conference room,” she requested, hoping to some time. “Sure,” he nodded and left. Shepard watched him leave and felt suddenly lonely. The emotion took her by such surprise that she glowered at thin air. She never felt lonely when someone left. Usually there would be relief or no emotion at all, but Garrus’ departure left her with an emptiness she wasn’t willing to admit.
Chapter 11

Shepard sat at a table in the Mess Hall, going over reports for the last few weeks. She was pleased to notice that the people on board were becoming an actual team. Every day she would make her rounds, speaking with each of her ground crew for a few moments.

They were finally heading to the Citadel after doing a few extra missions that had come to them after they retrieved Liara. She tried different team combinations; though she always took Garrus with her because of his marksmanship. He was an excellent shot and saved her rear more than a few times. He was getting good at reading her; she didn’t have to give him orders anymore. He already knew what she was planning.

Wrex was an excellent tank fighter. He was able to take a lot of damage before he shields would collapse. She smiled to herself as she remembered the banter between the crew when they were out on missions. She found out that she couldn’t have Ashley on any team that included aliens. She was good, but she always allowed her prejudices to get in the way. So since she always brought Garrus with her, she opted out of using Ashley.

Kaidan was a strong biotic. She was pleasantly surprised with his performance but she worried; he was still recovering from a migraine from over use on the last mission. She had never taken Liara with her, but she talked to the Asari many times; learning more about the Protheans. Tali was an amazing benefit to the crew; her knowledge of the Normandy’s engines has been indispensible. She hated taking her on missions for that one reason. She was slowly getting her ground team out of their rigidity. That had always annoyed her; she never liked how the Alliance was so strict with their rules and regulations.

“You look deep in thought,” Garrus’ voice broke her of her musings as he took a seat across from her.

“You look annoyed,” she commented, setting the data pad down.

“I noticed there is no place on the ship for a person to practice hand to hand,” he muttered, and she heard the slight disgust in his voice. She knew all turian vessels allowed the crewman to work out their aggressions, and fraternization was allowed as long as it didn’t affect the mission.

“Well, when Captain Anderson was in command of the ship, Nihlus and I would go down into the Cargo Hold and he would teach me there,” she answered him. His eyes brightened for a moment before uncertainty clouded them.

“If you have time, do you want to practice?” he asked cautiously. He wasn’t sure if she would be willing. He would have asked Wrex, but they butted heads so often that it wouldn’t have been safe. He couldn’t fight the other humans because they were still leery about having an alien on board, with the exception of Alenko. Even with that knowledge, Alenko wasn’t an option. Garrus had seen him fight and knew there would be no challenge in it. Shepard was good, but he never pitted himself against her before. He was looking forward to the challenge if she accepted.

“Sure, but I need to talk to Kaidan first,” she answered. Something was bothering her with Alenko. He was considered an amazingly powerful biotic, but she saw no evidence of that; other than the energy he radiated. Liara once told her that he wasn’t as powerful as she was, but she was sure he had more strength than he was showing.

She glanced at Kaidan, who was working not far away; wondering how she would approach the subject. She turned back to Garrus; he was watching her thoughtfully. “I’ll meet you down in the Cargo Hold shortly,” she told him. He knew it was a dismissal, but he had no intention of leaving. Garrus watched as she left, walking over to Kaidan. He couldn’t hear what was being said, but it seemed to put Kaidan on edge. Garrus watched as the biotic tensed, his hands balling into fists at his side. Garrus initially felt anger when he thought something else was going on; that maybe Shepard had an interest in Kaidan. His hand began to clench as he watched them speaking; but after he watched them for a moment it became obvious that there was nothing between the two humans. Relief spread through him with that realization, followed quickly by annoyance with himself for
letting his emotions away from him.

He admired how she stood before Alenko with confidence. He could just imagine what her voice sounded like right now. He snapped himself from his thoughts when he heard a purr and knew it had come from him. He was about to rush from the room, but his plan backfired. She walked over to him, a frustrated look on her face. “Are you ready?” she asked.

He swallowed before answering, trying to get his wayward thoughts under control. She was his superior officer; he was not supposed to be thinking about her as anything else. The one night they shared shouldn’t have meant anything. They had both been drugged and Chellick had been there as well.

“Sure,” he answered and cursed silently as he heard the change in his voice.

She raised a brow when she heard the raspy quality of his voice. She wasn’t going to ask if he was alright; that would just embarrass him and make her feel real awkward. “Fine, change into civilian clothes, unless I am allowed using my biotics,” she smirked as his mandibles went slack.

“I’ll change,” he muttered. She smiled at his retreating back. This would be the first time she would see him in civilian clothes, and she was hoping that she wouldn’t make a fool of herself. She also hoped that would give her an edge in fighting because she was going to need it. She had read his file and knew he excelled at hand to hand.

She gave him enough time to change and left for the Cargo Hold. Garrus was already there, limbering up. Wrex was on the sidelines, along with Ashley. The Alliance officer was concentrating her attention on cleaning the guns. “So, are you ready?” she asked, walking up to him.

Wrex stood there watching them fight; he was trying to hold his amusement in. Shepard landed a few blows, though you could see she wasn’t comfortable fighting without her biotics. Garrus was holding back, hitting her lightly. He was wondering when one of them would break and the real fighting would begin.

Garrus took another swing, making contact. This wasn’t challenging for him and he was becoming annoyed. “I’m putting my armor back on and you’re using your biotics,” he told her. He only hoped she didn’t kill him.

Garrus moved in front of her with his armor on, taking a fighting stance. She threw the first punch and he dodged it easily. Her next two attacks hit him solidly, knocking him back a couple of steps. Garrus spun out of her reach and swung out, hitting her in the stomach. She retaliated by hitting him in the face.

Wrex watched the change in their fighting, now that the Commander was allowed to use her biotics. She was quicker and stronger and she was giving Garrus a hard time.

Shepard noticed Wrex and Ashley leaving the area out of the corner of her eye. She was happy that it was only her and Garrus; she always hated people watching her. Garrus tripped her and she caught his armor, taking him down with her. Garrus was caught off guard by the move. He caught himself with his hand, his body hovering above her. She stared up at him, gasping for breath. Garrus was mesmerized; her green eyes caught his and held. He was wondering when one of them would break and the real fighting would begin.

Garrus wanted to curse. She didn’t want to be in this position. After all the dreams she had of this turian this was straining her; having him in this position and not being able to do anything. She forced herself not to move, to give away the fact that she was enjoying him being above her.

He felt himself leaning forward without thought; with a hiss he jumped to his feet, breaking the moment. Shepard closed her eyes, trying to control her racing heart. She stared at the turian in front of her, unsure of what to say. Slowly she got to her feet, trying to find something to say that would break the awkward silence between. She opened her mouth, but was interrupted.

“Shepard, we’re docking at the Citadel,” Joker said over the comm.

“Joker, notify the crew that they have two days of shore leave,” she commanded and turned to head for the elevator. Garrus stopped her, placing a hand on her arm. He didn’t want her to leave; he wanted her with him. He was fighting a battle with himself and he was losing. He stayed quiet, trying not to say what was racing through his mind.
She looked up at him uncertainly; she wasn’t even sure what her feelings for this turian were. Sure he had a starring roll in quite a few of her dreams. But she was his commanding officer and anything she did could place a strain on the crew. She waited for him to say something, but only silence followed. “I should go. I need to see the Turian Councilor,” she told him quietly.

Garrus watched her and she knew what had crossed his mind. He knew that over the past few months something changed for him, but he wasn’t sure exactly what it was. He watched her walk away, not sure what he was going to do.

~ooooooooo~

Shepard walked into Pallin’s office, feeling desperate. She needed to get Garrus out of her mind before she did something she would regret. She had time to spare since she wasn’t seeing the Turian Councilor until the next morning.

Pallin glanced up at Shepard as she entered his office. He was pleasantly surprised that she was here. He heard the Normandy had docked and wondered if he would see her. He could see something was bothering her, and he wondered what it could be.

She walked up to his desk, her eyes never leaving his. She moved around the desk toward him. “So, are you busy tonight?” she asked, trying to keep the desperation out of her voice.

“I am now,” he smirked. He thought about asking her what was wrong, but that wasn’t the type of relationship they had. Mutual needs met, no emotion; only physical release if they wanted it. He rose from his desk, ready to leave immediately. Her eyes and smile widened.

They headed to her apartment. He noticed her hesitating for a moment. He followed her gaze and noticed Garrus heading towards Chora’s Den. He didn’t think anything of it until he caught the look in her eyes. For one second the ‘Commander’ look was gone and he knew what her problem was.

She led him into her apartment, shaken for a moment after seeing Garrus. She was trying not to think about him and so naturally he came into view. She turned to Pallin, not waiting for permission or small talk.

Pallin growled low in his throat, pinning her to the nearest wall. He took everything she had to give.

When he was sheathed inside of her, he noticed that she wasn’t here with him. Her thoughts seemed to be elsewhere. A part of him was insulted, but he understood the situation she was in.

They both found their release, and Shepard leaned against him, panting heavily. “Shepard, why don’t you go to him?” Pallin asked knowingly. She looked up at him in shock and he grinned. He knew his next words would shake her. He hoped that she would do what she should be doing. She didn’t need him anymore; not when she had such strong feelings for someone else.

~ooooooooo~

Garrus headed for Chora’s Den. He needed to forget the Commander, but he knew that would be impossible. She had haunted him ever since their night together. He went up to the only free dancer, paying her and then taking a seat. He watched her while watching the crowd for someone with whom he could let off some steam.

He saw a few Turian females watching him. Trying to shove any thought of Shepard out of his mind, he walked over to one of them. He couldn’t shake the memory of the look on her face while pinned beneath him.

He took the female into one of the backrooms. What started off as a heated moment changed when he looked at his lover and all he saw was Shepard’s face. The mood changed immediately; he was no longer fucking an unknown woman, but Shepard.

~ooooooooo~

Shepard woke early the next morning, heading for the Citadel Tower; where the Turian Councilor was waiting for her. Pallin had left late the previous night. They had slept together, but her mind was elsewhere. She hadn’t been with Pallin in her mind, she had been with another Turian; one with bright blue eyes.

Pallin had noticed, and what shocked her was that he hadn’t been offended. His parting words had surprised and scared her. Now she smirked at the words, shaking her head. “Shepard, you seem preoccupied,” a voice said, making her spin around quickly.

She gasped when she saw the Turian Councilor behind her. “Sorry, sir, my mind was elsewhere,”
she muttered with a grimace. He motioned her to follow him into his office. “You wanted to see me?” she commented as she took a seat across from him.

He passed her a coffee; he still didn’t know how people could drink this stuff. It had a strong bitter scent to it. She looked at the coffee with a smirk. “Is there any sugar and cream here?” she asked. He produced the items his secretary had brought in with it. Shepard grinned, mixing several packets in the liquid. He widened his eyes as the scent changed. It now smelled sweeter.

“How is your search going?” he asked. He watched her intently, noticing another scent on her. This one wasn’t a territorial scent, but it let him know that she had been with another turian.

“Considering we only have Benezia’s daughter, we are no further ahead. Although we have noticed that geth activity has increased on quite a few different planets. We have completed several smaller missions and most of the time, the problems were geth-related,” she told him, her frustration showing. His gaze snapped to her, breaking him from his other thoughts. His eyes widened at this news; he wasn’t expecting this. The geth were making themselves known awfully close to Citadel space.

“That is disturbing news indeed,” he muttered. He wasn’t sure what to make of this. They already knew that Saren was searching for some way to bring the Reapers back. That was the actual problem; he didn’t believe in the Reapers. He wasn’t sure what Shepard thought. She seemed to be a pragmatic woman, but that didn’t mean much at the moment. Humans were known to believe almost anything. “Have you come up with any proof on the claim of the Reapers?” he asked, trying to keep the disdain from his voice.

“Other than the vision I had; no, not as of this time,” she answered. “Although if they are involved, I don’t think we will see any proof until they are ready. They wouldn’t want to show their hand too early and give themselves away,” she stated thoughtfully. He wasn’t sure by her look if she believed in them or not.

He watched her for a moment. Her reasoning was sound, and he couldn’t argue with it. It was a perfect tactical move. But he read the meaning behinds her words; if they didn’t take the possible threat of Reapers seriously, then the probability was high that they would be in danger. He had no answer for that, so the best option was to ignore it for the time being.

Silence descended. Shepard shifted uncomfortably in her chair; she no longer wanted to be in his office. The Councilor was deep in thought, wondering if he should push for more information. He was fairly sure there was nothing left for her to say.

“When do you head out again?” he asked her, breaking the tense silence.

“The day after tomorrow; I gave the crew two days shore leave,” she stated, rising to her feet. “Anyway, I need to check on the ship and make sure it was restocked properly,” she said, nodding politely to him.

He moved around his desk quickly, placing a hand on her arm. Shepard looked at him curiously, but he could see she was annoyed by his invasion of her personal space. He took a step closer to her, taking in the new scent. “Where is your mate?” he asked. He didn’t like that she had a new scent when she had already been marked by another.

“I have no mate! He was never supposed to call himself my mate. I have denied him,” she bit out, her eyes turning cold. The Councilor was shocked for a moment that one of his people would force the issue. He thought of asking for the turian’s name so action could be taken, but he knew she would never give it.

“What happened to this turian?” he asked her. He idly traced the scars on her shoulder from markings of his people. Since she wasn’t wearing armor, her scars showed and she did nothing to hide them. Her shirt had a low scoop neck that showed most of the skin above her shoulders. She once said it must have been different with humans. Maybe she was right, since they have such soft skin. Maybe a turian didn’t have a choice and they didn’t mean to mark them. Though that didn’t make sense; it was well known that humans were soft, so there shouldn’t have been biting.

“The problem has been taken care of,” she muttered. She didn’t brush off his touch; he wasn’t being harmful as of yet, but he was making her self-conscious of the marks.

“I see you’ve found someone new,” he commented. He wasn’t sure why he really cared, but he did.
He took in the scent once more, trying to place it. It was vaguely familiar, but he couldn’t remember who it belong to.

“What I do with my personal time is not your concern,” she hissed, jerking away from his touch. He growled low, grabbing her shoulder and bent over so that his face was nearly pressed to her shoulder. His mandibles clicked against his face as he thought about following through with this move. He lightly brushed one of his mandibles against her skin, and felt her jump at the contact. He stood back up, smirking as she looked at him coldly. He could see that she didn’t understand what he had done and he wasn’t going to explain it to her... yet.

Shepard scowled as she felt something wet on her shoulder. She knew he hadn’t licked her, but she wasn’t sure what he was up to. She scowled as he stood up, a smug look on his face. She didn’t know what his game was, but she didn’t like it. Right now she was out of her league; she knew more about turian culture than most humans, but she didn’t have a clue what he just did or the meaning behind it.

Shepard left his office, relieved that she wouldn’t have to answer any more questions. She was tired of questions and it irked her that the turian had taken special interest in her. She didn’t understand why, but she wasn’t going to question it; he might be useful later on. Maybe.

She walked briskly toward the Normandy, and saw some of the crew milling about on the promenade and in the C-Sec offices. They greeted her as she passed them. She walked onto the Normandy, surprised to see Joker in his pilot’s chair. “Why didn’t you go on shore leave?” she asked as she walked over to him.

“I’ll be leaving in a few minutes. I wanted to do an instrument check before I leave,” he told her as he rose from his seat. She backed up, giving him room to move. “You should talk to Garrus. He came storming in here last night,” he told her. She nodded, leaving him there to search for the turian.

She wasn’t hard to find. She found him under the Mako; cursing a blue streak that made her raise her brow. “You know, if the Mako is pissing you off that much, we could always shoot it out the hanger,” she commented mildly. She heard a clatter, followed by a bang and another string of curses that she couldn’t translate. She understood a few of the words, but not all of them.

The next thing she saw were cloudy blue eyes staring up at her, “Is there something you needed, Shepard?” he asked coolly. He had tried getting her out of his mind. He had slept with that turian female and felt disgusted afterward. So he marched his way to the ship and crashed here.

“Wondering what put you in a bad mood,” she told him as she crouched down at his side. Her eyes were searching for any signs that told her what the problem might be. Garrus’ eyes widened as he smelled her; he could smell another Turian on her, a marking. It wasn’t a territorial marking, but it was the next best thing. Anger and rage burned in him, and his eyes flicked to her shoulder, where his mark lay. Next to it was a small scrape and he knew what happened. Some turian placed his scent on her as a challenge. He wondered if Shepard even realized what that meant.

Other emotions welled in him; ones that he’d been fighting a losing battle with. He didn’t want her to know. It would create too many problems and he was sure she didn’t feel that way about him.

“It’s nothing to worry about,” he muttered, avoiding her eyes. He couldn’t meet her eyes, or she would see what he was hiding. He knew it. If it had been any other human, he would have risked it, but she was too intuitive.

“You know, Garrus, for a C-Sec agent you really are bad at lying,” she smirked. His eyes flashed to hers and he saw the surprised expression that covered her face. He was about to say something; deny what she saw, but she said nothing. Her eyes clouded over, and a look of sadness came over her. He wanted to know what she was thinking, but he didn’t dare ask.

Shepard held her breath as she saw what he had been hiding. She could see emotion there that she didn’t understand, but she knew it concerned her. Her body reacted to that emotion, knowing what it was even though she wanted to deny it.

“I’ll leave you to your work,” she said softly. Her voice washed over him, soothing his nervousness. He closed his eyes for a brief moment, and then opened them to find her walking away. He watched her until she entered the elevator and disappeared.

“You know you’re a coward, right, Turian?” Wrex bit out, his voice filled with annoyance.
Garrus glared at him, not bothering to rise to his bait. He was about to slide himself back under the Mako, but Wrex’s next words stopped him cold. “If you want her, take her. If she doesn’t want you, she’ll tell you,” the krogan grinned. Garrus scowled at him before sliding back under the Mako, the krogan’s words playing in his head. Was it that simple, or would he find himself out of the air lock? he wondered as he got back to work.

~oooooooooooo~

Shepard was happy. They were finally heading for another destination that would give them more information on what Saren was up to. They had been busy completing other missions for the Alliance, but she was finally on the trail again. These had provided her with more money, but the real benefit had been in training the crew. She thought people would balk that she wasn’t going straight after Saren, but her crew seemed to understand the necessity of patience.

She leaned back in her office chair, a mug of coffee next to her. It had been awhile since she and Garrus had talk by the Mako. Things had changed between them.

She wasn’t sure what had come over the turian, but a few weeks ago he found her working and told her it was time for her to eat. She told him she would eat when she was done. For some odd reason, he hadn’t believed her. He scooped her off of the chair, placing her on her feet and then had the nerve to lead her out of her room. If that wasn’t the worst part, he then brought her food and sat there until she was full. The second time it happened, she had been annoyed and stopped him with her biotics. After the biotics wore off, it still hadn’t stopped him; he had instead become more adamant. Now she actually appreciated it; she was feeling much better and her biotics weren’t flaring out of control as much. She felt normal, and though she would never admit this to anyone, she looked forward to his visits.

A few times when she couldn’t sleep because of the nightmares from the beacon, she would head to the Mess Hall. Every time this happened, Garrus would eventually appear. It was almost like he had a radar on her. The first few times it happened, she had been irked; now she was glad for the company, especially from him.

She finished with the maps and all the information she had on Noveria. The planet was predominately a research facility, where several of the galaxies most important companies could test their new developments safely. She looked at the layout of the main building and didn’t see anything particularly interesting or out of the normal. She was betting that she would be sent to one of the facilities for more information.

She tossed the data pad down and rose to her feet, stretching out her muscles. She glanced at the door, just as it opened. Garrus stood there for a moment and walked further in. “I don’t have to argue with you this time about eating?” he asked, and raised a brow ridge quizzically.

“Not this time. I finished what I wanted to do. Now all we have to do is wait until we land on Noveria,” she told him.

“You for certain and I’m thinking of either Kaidan or Wrex; not sure yet,” she answered, shrugging her shoulders. “I wish I didn’t have to take you so often, but you’re the best we have with guns. I know you need some time for yourself,” she muttered. She hated the fact that she couldn’t let him relax; always calling on him for missions. But he was the one that she trusted the most. He always had her back.

“I would prefer to be out in the field, rather than having down time,” he told her, trying to ease her guilt. What he didn’t tell her was that he didn’t want her going where he couldn’t protect her. He needed to protect her, just as she always did for him.

“Well, your wish is my command,” she grinned, moving past him. He stopped her, grasping her arm loosely in his hand as he turned her to face him. He stared down at her, fighting with himself not to say what was on the tip of his tongue. Or to do what he has been imagining for as long as he could remember.

She raised a brow, waiting for him to say something. She met his gaze with her own; her body heating from his close proximity to her. She swallowed nervously, hoping he hadn’t noticed. Her eyes widened as she noticed him leaning forward. She knew she should stop this; she couldn’t let
this happen. She was about to say something…
“Sorry, Shepard,” he muttered, backing away from her quickly. He looked at her, torment in his eyes. He moved toward the door, but she stopped him.
“Garrus, don’t be sorry. I am as much at fault here, but you are right. We shouldn’t let anything happen,” she muttered, her words feeling hollow to her. She didn’t want him walking out; she didn’t want to see him hurt.
He stopped where he was and stared at her, his mind not believing what he just heard. He knew there had been tension between them, but he thought it had been because she knew of his feelings for her. He walked over to her and stopped, gazing down at her. Her words had hit him; he heard the sorrow in her tone, as well as something else he couldn’t quite define.
He took another step toward her, about to do something he always wanted to do. “Commander, I need you up in the cockpit. They are not giving us permission to land. Also, the Turian Councilor wishes to speak with you,” Joker interrupted them. They backed away from each other quickly.
“Patch the Turian Councilor through to me here in a few moments. I will be up to the cockpit after that meeting,” she answered him. She turned to Garrus and opened her mouth to say something; then closed it when she couldn’t come up with the words.
Garrus looked at her, understanding in eyes and left her in the room.
Shepard took a seat at her desk, and the holo image of the Turian Councilor came into view.
“Shepard, I sent you information that you might want to look at. We found some things that Saren had his claws into. One of those ventures is on Noveria. It seems he is helping to fund a project there. Try and get to those facilities; it might have the information you are looking for,” he stated.
“We just arrived on Noveria. I’ll look at the information before going leaving the ship. Thank you for your help,” she nodded to him.
“What else I should know about?” he asked, watching her closely from his desk. Her holo projection looked at him, confused. He sat there, waiting patiently for her answer.
“Nothing yet. We’ve done a few more missions, some of which included geth,” she told him, unsure what he was looking for.
“When you are finished with this mission, contact me and head for the Citadel. We need to discuss something important,” he ordered.
“Councilor, if I have to come back to the Citadel after each mission, it will be harder to catch Saren. The more time it takes, the further ahead he gets with his plan. We can’t allow that,” she told him firmly.
“Very true, but this meeting can’t wait,” he told her.
“Fine. I’ll contact you when we are on our way,” she muttered, not bothering to hide her annoyance. The Turian Councilor cut off communications. He sat his desk, contemplating what he was about to do. He was losing sight of his goal the more he talked to her. At first it was just to befriend her but now that had changed. He didn’t think of her for political gain anymore. She was originally someone to be used to keep the humans in line, but somewhere along the way, he had jettisoned that idea. He hadn’t even planned on helping her with her investigation; but here he was, giving her more information. He had even hired people to find more for him.
He knew she was right. Saren was getting closer to his ultimate goal every time he asked her back to the Citadel. But he needed to see her - he needed to do this. It had been bothering him for a while. She looked at the information he sent and wondered if they were ready to take this mission on. She matched the information up with the diagrams she had of the place. She had a hard decision to make. Benezia could be here, and that would create problems for her if she lost control. Would the team be able to handle it or should she redirect her ship to Feros, instead?
With a sigh she made up her mind. She knew no one was going to like it. “Joker, set a course for Feros,” she ordered.
“Commander, are you sure?” Joker asked. It wasn’t like her to change her mind.
“Do it, Joker. Head straight to Feros,” she snapped. Joker shook his head, wondering what had changed her mind so suddenly. Garrus was standing behind him; he had come up to wait for the Commander.
“What do you think that was all about?” Joker asked him.
“I’m not sure, but I plan on finding out. It isn’t like her to change her mind so suddenly,” Garrus muttered worriedly. “Don’t leave here yet. She might be changing her mind once more.”
Joker looked at him incredulously, but kept the ship where it was. He wasn’t sure what was going on, but one thing he knew was that Garrus would be able to get to the bottom of it. He and Shepard’s relationship wasn’t a secret, no matter how much they wanted it to be.
Garrus left Joker and headed for Shepard’s cabin, where he knew she would be. He was concerned that she was changing her mind. Everything he knew about her said she wasn’t one to dramatically change course, as some humans were known to do.
He walked into her room without knocking. He gave up doing that a while ago, once he took it upon himself to do what he wanted - court her as a turian. Making sure she ate no matter what, making sure she got her rest and anything else that proved he would be a suitable mate. He wasn’t even sure if she realized it. She was sitting at her desk with her head in her hands.
“Shepard?” he called softly as he moved up behind her. He rested one hand on her shoulder, his talon idly running along her bare skin. He was carefully testing the waters. She glanced over her shoulder at him and smiled.
“I take it you came here to find out why I changed our plans?” she asked with a quirk of her brow.
“That’s one reason for me being here,” he told her. He knew she would tell him eventually.
“Benezia will probably be down there,” she muttered. He looked at her, shocked that she was giving up this chance. He didn’t understand why she would bypass the possibility of capturing the asari Matriarch.
“Then why aren’t we going down there? If we get to Benezia, we can find out where Saren is!” he bit out, his anger rising that she would throw this opportunity away.
“Yes, and we are going after a very powerful Matriarch and I will lose control. I am not ready to go up against a Matriarch,” she told him softly. The vulnerability in her voice stopped him, his ire immediately disappearing. He looked at her and saw that she was showing him what was behind the Commander’s mask that she always wore.
Garrus turned her chair so that she was facing him, “What will happen if you lose control?” he asked her. He was worried about her; he had never seen her like this before. A part of him wanted to puff out his chest in pride that she trusted him this much.
“If I lose control, people die or get severely injured. It’s happened once and I don’t want a repeat of that,” she muttered, not meeting his concerned gaze. He threw aside all caution and placed his hand on her cheek. He forced her to look at him.
“Shepard, I’ll be there. I’ll make sure you don’t lose control,” he told her. This was one promise he planned on keeping. He didn’t like seeing her worrying about this. He would do what he could to make sure that she kept control.
“Garrus, you can’t keep that promise,” she muttered.
“Would it be any different after the next mission? Would you be more sure?” he asked quietly. She closed her eyes and sighed. She knew he was right. It didn’t matter how much time passed; she would still be afraid of losing control. After that fateful incident she’d been afraid of losing total control. Her actions left two crewmen dead and three more injured. Ever since then, she did everything in her power to avoid being placed in that position again. But now she didn’t have a choice.
“No, I won’t.” she told him hoarsely. She was allowing him to see what most usually didn’t get to see. She was showing herself without walls. He tugged her hand so that she stood in front of him. He closed the space between them, pulling her into his embrace. He knew she needed this right now, and he needed to feel her. He rested her head against hers until she looked up at him, then he carefully placed his forehead against hers.
When he backed up, she looked at him quizzically, “What does that mean?” she asked him. This was another first for her. She never had a turian place their forehead against hers.
He grinned. “I’ll explain it some other time,” he answered. He wasn’t ready to answer that question. That would reveal far too much about his feelings for her.
Shepard stood behind Joker as he opened communications with the tower. “Pull the Spectre card.” she grinned deviously.

He smirked. “Will do, Commander,” he said and she listened as he gave the control tower her credentials. They weren’t too happy that a Spectre wanted to dock at their port.

“Wow, aren’t they so welcoming?” she grumbled sarcastically. “Have Kaidan and Garrus suit up,” she ordered before leaving and getting herself ready.

She left him there, heading to the Cargo Hold. Garrus was back at the Mako. Wrex was looking annoyed about something. “What’s your problem today?” she asked with a smirk.

Wrex turned and looked at her. He gave her searching look. She could tell he was about to ask her to do something for him; and her curiosity was piqued. “I want to reclaim my family’s stolen armor,” he told her, waiting for a reaction.

“Fine, send the coordinates to Joker and when we are done here, we’ll head there,” she told him, patting him reassuringly on the arm. She walked over to her locker, pulling out her armor. It had been fixed and most of the dents gone.

She stripped out of her clothes, “You know, Shepard, I don’t think the turian can take much more of seeing you strip,” Wrex turned to her, grinning.

“Jealous, Wrex?” she grinned and winked.

“Ha, if you were a krogan female, I wouldn’t need to be jealous. You would have already been with me. But you’re not a krogan and…” he sighed, his eyes dramatically flicking over to Garrus. When she started blushing, he chuckled. She joined in the laughter as the human crew looked at them oddly. But her eyes were on Garrus. He was watching her so intently that she could feel his gaze as if it was his hand. Quickly she turned around and slipped on her armor.
Finding where they need to go was almost too easy. Getting there was the tricky part. In order to reach Benezia, the team needed access to the garage. A pass was required to leave the facility, and they didn’t have one. Gianna Parasini, Administrator Anoleis’ assistant, told them of a person who might be able to provide one in return for some help. Now they just needed to find him. From the sound of the name, Shepard was betting he was Turian, but she wasn’t positive.

“So what do we do now?” Kaidan asked as they headed to the lounge.

“I’m hoping they serve food here, and then we need to locate Lorik Qui’in” she told him. She went over to the bar, ordering some food. They didn’t have much to offer, but something was better than nothing.

“Shepard, did you talk with him?” Kaidan asked, nodding toward a turian that was seated alone at a back table.

“Not yet, but I will be in a few moments,” she grinned. She was positive that this was their man. The three of them walked over to the turian. They spoke to him for a few moments; their prospects looking better as they accepted his proposition. They now had a way to get a pass to the garage. At the moment Shepard would do almost anything to get the pass. The really needed to get Peak 15. Qui’in was the head of Synthetic Insights, and Administrator Anoleis had locked him out of his own facility. He needed someone to get inside and retrieve proof of the administrator’s corruption from his computer. This mission she would enjoy doing; it would be a great pleasure to find anything that could put that Salarian ass in his place. He reminded her so much of Udina.

“Well, it looks like we have to clean house,” she grinned, leading the way to the elevators.

“That Salarian needs to be brought down a few pegs,” Shepard muttered.

“Brought down a few pegs?” Garrus said and looked at Shepard curiously, never having heard that saying before.

“Yeah, he needs to learn his place,” she said, hoping that explanation made more sense.

They exited the elevator and were met by two guards. Shepard was able to talk them into leaving. She grinned as Kaidan rolled his eyes. “Anyone want to guess where his office is?” she muttered as they climbed the stairs. As soon as they reached the top, they were under attack. Shepard swore profusely.

“You can sweet talk guards into leaving, and those words come out of your mouth now?” Garrus joked. He found it amusing; he had watched her sweet talk her way out of things on numerous occasions. But when she was pissed, the words that she came up with were not worth repeating.

“You haven’t changed one bit, Shepard,” Kaidan said, grinning at her. She raised her brow, not understanding what he meant. “Remember how during Alliance training you were able to talk McFarlin out of his anger all the time?” Kaidan asked.

She scowled at them. “Well it worked, didn’t it?” she grumbled defensively.

She left the two of them to watch the door as she approached the computer. She closed her eyes in frustration, glaring at the machine. She hated hacking; she was good at it, but she hated it. “So, who wants to hack?” she asked her companions. Garrus came over to her and she took over his spot at the door.

Her body went on alert; she knew that more people had just entered the offices. They would have to fight their way out. But something told her this fight wasn’t going to be as easy as the one they fought to get here.

Kaidan watched Shepard nervously as she let her biotics flare to life. “Garrus, you better hurry; we have company,” she ordered, her voice resonating with the energy surrounding her. As she watched the approaching opponents, she knew one was a strong biotic. She could see the energy surrounding the person as she moved up the stairs.

Garrus paused for a split second in his hacking when he heard Shepard speak. He didn’t doubt her
for a second; she’d been right too many times. When she said something of that nature, it was
trouble. He was starting to differentiate between her short phrases as to how dangerous a situation
was. She said ‘company’ this time, so it was going to be a lot of people; but nothing they couldn’t
handle. He was glad she hadn’t added anything to that line.
“Let me rephrase that, we have company with teeth,” she muttered. Garrus downloaded the data,
closed his eyes and groaned. Translation of that line - there was a biotic in the group.
“I have the information, Shepard,” he told her as he moved over to the door.
“So Kaidan, do you want the biotic?” she asked him. Garrus looked at her oddly; Shepard normally
always took the biotic opponents. Shepard waited for his answer; she wanted Alenko to come out of
hiding, but the look on his face told her everything she needed to know. “Fine, I got it,” she
muttered.
They left the room, ready for the fight that was waiting for them. Shepard took the lead, followed
closely by Garrus. “Garrus, take out who you can down there,” she ordered, nodding toward the
enemies on the ground below them.
“Kaidan, you’re with me,” Shepard stated, moving down the hallway carefully. Damn! She should
have brought another shooter instead of a biotic. Shepard lifted the first man in the air, waiting for
Kaidan to shoot, but the shot didn’t come. He was shooting at the other one. She rolled her eyes,
letting him drop. She didn’t want to use a lot of biotics; they were just beginning this mission.
She hated using her gun; it felt odd to her. She was used to using her biotics, but she didn’t have
anyone to work with right now. “All clear down below,” Garrus said from right beside her. A small
chuckle escaped him when she jumped.
Shepard holstered her gun, and switched to her biotics; feeling more secure now that Garrus was
with her. It didn’t take long before the only opponent left was the leader. Garrus smirked. He waited,
knowing Shepard was going to trying and talk her down. She always tried giving a person another
chance, though it was limited. Even the smallest sign that they were going to attack and she would
kill them. Her desire to converse also depended on her disposition. It had taken him a while to figure
out her moods; now he could read the signs. She turned to him and nodded. That was when he
noticed she had the soldier in a stasis field; her hand approaching her gun.
He waited for Shepard to drop the shield; without thought, he put a bullet through her.
“Now we can finally get that pass and enter the garage,” Shepard smirked as they followed her to the
elevator.
~oooooooo~
The highlight of day was watching Anoleis being carted away in cuffs. Shepard went to his office to
give help, if necessary. She couldn’t wipe the smile off her face even if she tried. Garrus shook his
head in amusement at her; the grin still hadn’t left her face as they walked to the garage.
They hadn’t made it far into the garage when they spied a geth stalker jumping from the ground to
the upper wall. “More friends of yours, Garrus?” Shepard asked with a smirk. Garrus tried rolling his
eyes at her; reminded of the one that dropped really close to her when they were going after Liara.
Kaidan knocked several geth back while Garrus and Shepard bantered. He chuckled as he listened to
them. One of the geth rose to its feet and he could feel a headache coming on. He knew he should
tell Shepard, but since their last confrontation he couldn’t. She wanted to know why he was holding
himself back, and he didn’t know how to answer her. When they had trained together, he used his
biotics more than he did now, but he also had more headaches.
Now he held himself back. He was tired of the headaches or of losing control when he was in a rage.
Though it rarely happened anymore; he kept a tight leash on his biotics at all times. He knew she
wouldn’t understand. She was a powerful biotic that could use her power as much as she wanted.
Actually, in her case it was better that she did use it. He knew she had a lot of drawbacks, but it
never stopped her.
The last geth died not far away. Cautiously, Kaidan rubbed his brow, trying to ease the burgeoning
migraine. “Kaidan?” Shepard asked, concern lacing her voice.
“I’m fine, Commander,” Kaidan muttered, refusing to meet her eyes.
“Kaidan, there is one thing you had better learn right now. Never lie to me,” she stated, her voice
turning cold and deadly. Garrus turned a worried gaze at Alenko. He was pale and his eyes were glassy. Shepard had a right to be concerned. “I have a headache starting,” Kaidan muttered, rubbing the bridge of his nose.

“Alright, let’s head back to the Normandy. You are going to rest and I’ll bring Liara and Wrex with us,” she told them, leading the way back to the ship. Kaidan didn’t look happy and Garrus was leery about having Wrex on the team. He and the krogan rarely saw things the same way. Garrus didn’t like putting others in danger. He didn’t believe in killing unarmed opponents; whereas Wrex would shoot them anyway. He did his job and didn’t worry about the consequences. Yet Shepard had told him to hold his fire multiple times without argument. The krogan respected her, following her every order. So maybe this mission wouldn’t turn into a disaster.

Shepard made sure that Kaidan went to the Med Bay. Garrus grabbed some protein bars, following Kaidan’s suggestion. He wasn’t sure how many to take for Shepard. He’d seen how much of a toll her biotics could take on her and it worried him.

“What are the protein bars for?” Liara asked, coming up behind him.

“For Shepard when she wears herself out,” Garrus explained to her. He waited for the barrage of questions that would most likely come. “Where is Shepard?” he asked her when he looked around and couldn’t find her.

“She’s restocking on medigel and omnigel,” she answered. She was still trying to figure out why Shepard would need protein bars. To her it made no sense; sure she was a biotic, but she was human. Yes, she could see more dark matter surrounding her than most humans could, but that didn’t explain why Garrus would take these precautions.

Liara felt movement behind her; she turned quickly to find Wrex standing there. She swallowed nervously, eyeing the krogan uncertainly. She had heard he was not one to cross. Many crew members feared him, thinking he was dangerous. “Where is Shepard?” he asked her.

“She’s restocking our supplies,” she answered nervously. Wrex picked up on the asari’s discomfort; he grinned, showing his razor sharp teeth just to get a rise of out her. It didn’t fail; he watched as she took a few steps back, fear bright in her eyes. He wondered why Shepard was taking her. She was weak as far as he was concerned. He began to say something to let the asari know he wasn’t impressed with her, but he didn’t get the chance to complete his thought.

Wrex found himself stumbling to the side a bit as a wave of energy struck him in the shoulder. There was only one person on the ship that could do that… Shepard. He turned his attention toward the small human; he could see the irritation directed toward him. “Wrex, can I speak with you a moment?” she asked calmly, her voice icy cold.

Without question Wrex followed her to her room. If he were being completely honest, he was afraid. He knew this human; if she wanted to, she could make him suffer. He remembered Fist; how he was lying on the ground with her touching him. He remembered the scream that came from him. It still sent a chill down his spine. What he remembered most is how Fist could barely move afterwards, as if his body wouldn’t work. Now the same irate woman was standing there, giving him a look that made him concerned about her next move.

“Wrex, leave Liara alone. We both know she’s innocent. We both know she’s not made for combat, but I need her for this mission. So quit scaring her, or you and I will have a ‘talk’ that you won’t like,” she stated coldly. Wrex heard the threat loud and clear. He didn’t need to be told twice and he knew it was no idle threat. She would follow through and was more than capable of doing so.

It was funny. Months ago, if someone would have told him he would be scared of pissing off a human woman, he would have laughed in their face and then killed them for the insult. But here stood a human that he didn’t want to piss off. She’d earned both his respect and in no small amount, his fear. He had seen too many lives ended by her biotics and objects thrown around with ease for him not to be afraid.

“Why do we need her?” Wrex spat disgustedly. He knew that wouldn’t get him into trouble; Shepard told them all to voice their opinions.

“Because at the moment, we are going after her mother and I am hoping she will be able to talk some sense into her. I really don’t want to test myself against a Matriarch,” Shepard told him. Wrex
couldn’t believe what he was hearing. This woman, who stood up to him all the time, didn’t want to fight someone. “And get that look off of your face. I’m not afraid of going against her. I’m afraid of losing control. You don’t want to be there if I lose control,” she told him softly. He saw the haunted look in her eyes and wondered what could possibly be that bad. After a moment’s thought, he decided that he didn’t want to know.

So it looked like he was going to have to be very nice to that innocent asari, whether he wanted to or not. He would do anything to make sure the wrath of Shepard wasn’t turned his way. He smirked as he thought of going up against Saren. The poor turian didn’t know what was coming for him. He had heard some rumors that Saren had killed Shepard’s lover. Wrex wanted to be there when Shepard took him down, but he wanted to watch from a distance. Anyone thinking clearly wouldn’t want to be in the vicinity when Shepard’s anger got the better of her.

They walked back into the Mess Hall, where Garrus and Liara were waiting. “Garrus, a moment please,” Shepard said and motioned for him to follow her. Liara watched them curiously. First it had been the krogan, now it was the turian. She was worried that it would be her turn next. She didn’t want the Commander upset with her, so she always answered her questions. At first it had been out of fear; now she enjoyed the Commander’s visits. She always looked forward to them.

“What is it, Shepard?” Garrus asked, placing a hand on her shoulder when the doors closed behind them.

“I need you to promise me something. If I lose control… get yourself and those two out of the area,” she asked quietly.

“No, I’m not leaving your side,” Garrus stated coldly, not backing down from the hard look in her eyes. There was no way in hell he was leaving her alone.

“Garrus….” she started, but he cut her off.

“Sh Shepard, don’t ask it, because I will not leave you,” he stated adamantly. Without thinking about being caught by the two companions waiting in the Mess Hall, he lightly brushed the side of her face. “I know you can control your biotics. Everything will be fine,” he told her with a certainty he felt to his core. She grasped his hand, pressing it more firmly against her cheek.

“I hope you’re right,” she muttered quietly. Garrus smiled down at her, the pad of his thumb lightly caressing her cheek; his talon leaving a light red trail. The worried look left her eyes as he held them, letting her see his certainty. He closed the distance between them, his other arm encircling her waist. She closed what was left of the gap, resting her head on his chest. He closed his eyes, purring softly as he held her. She was a strong woman; he knew this, but right now she needed him to be strong for her. She leaned back from him, about to say something; but he stopped it when his forehead met hers lightly. They each closed their eyes; the only sounds her contented sighs and his gentle purring.

~oooooo~

Garrus sat with Shepard in the front, while Liara and Wrex were in the back of the Mako. Wrex wasn’t affected with Shepard’s driving so far, but he hadn’t seen the worst of it yet. Liara was very quiet. When Shepard shot off the hanger at full throttle, she let out one scared yelp. Since then she hadn’t said a word. Garrus glanced at her; her eyes were wide, and she had a death grasp on Wrex’s arm. She sat there shaking. It was easy to see she was scared. Shepard couldn’t blame her. Shepard wasn’t one you wanted to be in control of the Mako.

Wrex scowled down at the asari, repeating the mantra he had begun the moment he sat down next to her. Be nice, don’t piss Shepard off. That was the only thing keeping him from shoving her away. He didn’t want to see what Shepard could do inside of the Mako. He scowled at the turian, who was smirking at him.

“Hey, Wrex, you’re up. Get on the gun and take out those geth,” Shepard ordered as she drove high on a bank to avoid incoming fire. The Mako was dangerously close to tipping. “Garrus, keep an eye on our shields. Wrex, stay with that gun. Where you see a few geth, there are always more,” she stated.

Liara moved out of Wrex’s way so he could maneuver the gun easier. Her stomach felt like it was about to crawl out of her mouth. Her body was shaking badly. This was the first time she had been on a mission with Shepard. Now she understood why everyone complained about her driving.
Despite the fear, she had to admit that Shepard knew what she was doing. She missed most of the gun fire through their drive. Liara sighed with relief when they reached the research facility. She hopped out of the Mako on shaky legs. Garrus caught her before dropping to the ground. Shepard took the lead. The facility looked like it had been to hell and back. “Damn! What in the hell happened here?” she asked quietly. She wasn’t looking for an answer, but she was stunned by what she saw.

“Something bad,” Garrus muttered, moving up beside Shepard. He stayed with her as she slowly searched the area. She was looking for clues before they moved forward; she did this on every mission. Wrex stayed with Liara, which Garrus found odd. He didn’t look like he wanted to be that close to the asari; it made him wonder what Shepard had said to him.

“Wrex, you have the lead. Liara, stay behind us,” she ordered. Wrex and Garrus fell into a routine pattern while working with Shepard. Wrex would take the brunt of the fighting, Garrus would do most of the shooting and Shepard would use her biotics. It was a routine that worked well for them, and had frequently saved their lives. Liara was an outsider to all of this. She watched with amazement as they went from room to room, clearing out each area.

She was shocked that it wasn’t Shepard that got the computer running, but Garrus. She thought that would be something she would want to handle personally, but she passed it off. Garrus was the one who went down to the AI core. A part of her felt left out during their bantering, but she was lost. She wasn’t used to interacting like this. She was learning some things from Shepard, but obviously not enough.

Liara looked on nervously as Shepard ordered the AI to bypass security measures so they could get to the tram. From everything she had seen in the facility so far, she wasn’t sure if that was a good idea. The rachni were loose once again and that didn’t bode well for anyone. Wrex looked just as worried as she was. He knew all about the Rachni War.

She was shocked that her mother would have anything to do with this. It was so unlike anything Liara knew of her. Her mother knew what the Rachni War had cost the galaxy, so why would she be allowing this to happen? It was something that bothered Liara.

Shepard moved through the hallways cautiously; she felt uneasy about this mission. Something simply wasn’t right. She wasn’t sure if she should voice her opinion. She knew Garrus would understand now, but would Wrex? “Shepard, is everything alright?” Garrus asked when he saw her hesitate.

“Something about this mission doesn’t feel right,” she muttered, shrugging uncertainly. Garrus raised a brow ridge; he didn’t like the sound of that. Wrex stopped where he was, worry filling his eyes.

Liara watched her companions, fear racing through her at the looks they exchanged. She wasn’t sure what it meant, but she knew it wasn’t good.

They found survivors; quite a few of the workers had barricaded themselves onto one of the levels. A few of them had information, while others were so scared that they were barely talking. “I can’t believe that my mother would be a part of this,” Liara muttered, looking around at the devastation. “Yeah well, since she’s working with Saren, I wouldn’t put anything past her,” Shepard spat. After everything they’d witnessed on their missions, her desire to see the turian dead had grown exponentially. “Do you think you’ll be able to talk sense into her?”

“I don’t know, Shepard,” Liara muttered. Shepard could see the worried look on her face.

After working their way through numerous rooms, they finally found their target. Shepard was scared. She knew she was about to go up against a very powerful biotic and she didn’t know if she would be able to keep control. She looked back at her crew and saw they were prepared for whatever might come.

Garrus watched Shepard for a moment; he was worried. He rarely saw her this concerned about something. He knew it didn’t have to do with the fight that about to come, but her own biotics. Liara and her mother talked for a few moments, to no avail. Wrex gave Shepard an ‘I told you so’ look before drawing his weapon.

Shepard moved forward, keeping a tight rein on herself. Garrus stayed beside her, taking cover.
Wrex was going to use himself as a tank, but decided that would be a stupid plan. Shepard ordered him back and he understood why. They were going against asari commandos; the best the asari people had to offer. This fight needed finesse, something he lacked. He glanced at Shepard awaiting orders, but she was busy fighting.

Wrex picked a target and fired until the woman dropped. That was the way they worked, taking out as many targets as they could. When they had time, they would fire at Benezia. Shepard moved to a better position so she wasn’t being flanked. Garrus remained under cover, but stayed close to Shepard so he could cover her back. Wrex focused on killing as many foes as possible.

If they allowed themselves to become overrun, they would lose this fight. Their focus swung around when they heard a cry. Shepard was facing off with Benezia; the commandos lying dead at her feet. Garrus and Wrex started shooting at her, but her shields absorbed most of it. They were barely injuring her.

Garrus yelled when he saw Shepard being thrown across the room. She tumbled over the side of the railing to the floor below. He wanted to run to her; but if he left, Wrex and Liara would be out matched and they would die. He prayed to the spirits that she was alive. Fury rose up in him and he turned that emotion on their enemy.

Wrex let out a roar when he saw Shepard fly, taking out his biggest gun and firing at the asari. Liara used her biotics; they were harming her slowly, but not enough to defeat. More asari poured into the room. Wrex and Garrus looked around for a place to take cover, but couldn’t find any nearby. They had both left themselves open to attack; a dangerous place to be.

Garrus grunted when Benezia’s dark energy hit him. It hurt, but he was still standing. He grunted again when a bullet caught him. Liara cried out his name in warning. He spun around, but it was too late. Three commandos had their guns pointed at him. He knew he wouldn’t live through this, and it was a depressing thought. He finally had a few shared moments with Shepard and now there would be nothing more between them.

Garrus’ eyes widened as everything seemed to pause for a moment. The metal gratings beneath his feet creaked and groaned as it shook. The three asari standing in front of him flew backward. Garrus gasped when he saw Shepard standing there. Her body was surrounded by blue fire, and her eyes were empty. She turned, facing Benezia, slowly raising her hands out to the side of her body. Metal railings groaned as they were ripped away from the walkway.

Wrex turned from killing the last of the commandos. He felt the grating beneath him shake. He knew something more powerful than the Matriarch had stepped into the room. He knew if it was an enemy this would be his last fight, but he refused to wait for his death. He turned, his gun ready and stopped. For the first time in his life, he was completely dumbstruck.

Shepard was glowing brilliantly as she turned to face the Matriarch. He figured this was what Shepard meant by losing control. He watched her in amazement as the asari smashed into the wall with just a movement from Shepard. He stood there, not moving a muscle. He didn’t want to attract her attention.

The blue fire that surrounded her burned brighter. Garrus and Wrex had to shield their eyes from the light. “Garrus, we have to do something!” Liara told him.

“What the hell is happening?” he asked her, awed at the sight before him. Wrex listened to the two of them; he wondered the same thing. Shepard reminded him of a bomb that was about to go off. He didn’t want to be here when she exploded.

“She’s lost control; her energy is going to explode soon if she is not stopped,” Liara said frantically. She had never seen anything like this; it scared her to the core. She had seen Matriarchs use a lot of biotics before, but nothing like this. She had heard stories of this happening; a warning to the young, but she never thought Shepard could do this. She was sucking all the dark energy she could find to herself. Liara watched as she shot that energy at her mother. Her mother sailed through the air, hitting the wall with a sickening crack. Liara knew her mother was close to death, if not already dead.

Blood streaked the wall, following the path she slid down.

Shepard didn’t stop there; her mother’s body was lifted from the ground and held in the air by dark energy. Her mouth was open in a silent scream as blood oozed from her eyes and nose. Liara had to
look away; she didn’t want to see her mother like this.

Garrus watched what was happening in horror. He moved to Shepard’s side. He was afraid to touch her, but he knew he had to stop this somehow. Hesitantly he placed a hand on her shoulder, and her power flowed over him. It didn’t hurt. It actually felt very good; pleasure shot through him as her energy enveloped him. “Shepard…” he called to her, gripping her shoulder tighter.

When that didn’t work, he moved in closer and leaned over so that his face was close to her ear. “Shepard, you need to stop. She’s dead,” Garrus told her, keeping his voice soft and soothing.

He expected to feel at least some pain being this close to her. He was within the blue fire that was emanating from her. He felt only warmth in the energy that ran through him. There was pleasure, as well, but no pain. He felt her energy flicker for a moment, and he moved in front of her, watching her eyes. Slowly life flickered back into them. “Shepard, we won. It’s time to leave,” he whispered. He forgot about the others as he ran his hand along her cheek.

More life flickered in her eyes. She closed them in deep concentration as she pulled all the energy back into herself. It was a fight, a hard struggle to calm the energy. She moaned in pain and she felt like she was about to explode from her exertions. She took slow, even breaths once she knew she wasn’t going to lose control. “Thank you,” she said breathlessly. She panted in pain; she had never had to absorb that amount of energy before and it still hurt. If she didn’t let it out soon, she was going to pass out. The human body wasn’t meant to take this.

Garrus watched her closely; he knew something was wrong. He gave her a questioning look, but she didn’t speak. Her focus was on Benezia; she wasn’t dead yet, but she was very close. Slowly the Matriarch rose to her feet and spoke with Shepard.

Shepard struggled to make sense of what she was saying, but she couldn’t. The dark energy was making it too hard to focus. This was worse than anything she had ever felt. She didn’t want to go through this again.

She hoped her squad knew what was going on so she could question them later. She walked over to Benezia, placing a hand on her and shoving some of the overload into her. Shepard gained some relief, but not enough. She didn’t know what to do. It was times like this when she wished she was on the Citadel. She knew Garrus was here, but she didn’t want to use him. She didn’t want him to become another name on a long list. She cared for him too much for that.

“Shepard, we should go,” Garrus told her. He looked at her with worry. She didn’t say a word, but nodded her head. They were about to leave, but stopped dead when Benezia’s body rose to its feet once more. Shepard couldn’t believe that the Rachni queen was talking to her through the Matriarch’s body. She listened to what the creature had to say and was shocked that it was giving her the option of releasing her or killing her. She didn’t know what to do; she wasn’t sure if she should trust the queen.

Garrus looked skeptical, Wrex didn’t look impressed, and Liara had a lost look on her face. Shepard sighed, moving toward the controls. She hesitated for a moment before hitting the switch that would open the door. “Don’t make me regret this,” she warned the queen as she scrambled from her cage. “Are you sure that was the right thing to do?” Garrus asked her.

“No, but everything deserves a second chance, including the enemy,” she told him quietly. “If they are willing to change, then an enemy can become your friend.” Garrus looked at her thoughtfully before nodding in understanding.

Shepard moved slowly toward the exit, but she knew she wasn’t going to make it all the way to the Mako. She felt lightheaded and dizzy; she was fighting not to pass out, but it was a losing battle. Her brain was fogging, and black spots ate at her vision as she moved. She focused all of her energy on placing one foot in front of the other and ignored everything else.

“Shepard, are you alright?” Garrus asked as he moved up beside her. He could see something was off; she wasn’t moving right.

“Yeah,” she answered slowly, her voice sounding hollow and distant, even to herself. “No, I absorbed too much energy,” she told him quietly. She took a few more steps with Garrus right beside her. She stumbled and that was her downfall. In seconds, she passed into sweet oblivion.

Garrus looked startled for a moment as she fell into his arms. He was shocked at how light she was;
he thought she would feel heavier. He moved quickly through the halls, his concern growing with each passing moment. The other two had to run to keep up with him.

“Garrus, have the Normandy pick us up here or send the shuttle,” Wrex snapped. It would take too long to get to the Normandy the way they had come. Wrex was worried about Shepard; he never saw a human look like she did at the moment. She was pale, her body shivering in the turian’s arms. He wondered what happened for her to have a reaction like that.

Garrus sighed, halting his mad dash. He paged the Normandy and told them of Shepard’s condition. Joker assured them they were on their way.
Chapter 13

Garrus and Wrex sat in the Mess Hall, waiting for word of Shepard. “Have you ever seen anything like that?” Garrus asked him.

“No, that was a first for me,” Wrex muttered. He still couldn’t believe what had happened. It gave him a new respect for the Commander.

“How long is this going to take?” Garrus complained, his voice filled with irritation. Wrex smirked at the turian as he started pacing once more. He was so easy to read; the krogan was surprised he wasn’t in the Med Bay with Shepard.

Doctor Chakwas exited her office to see Garrus pacing before her. She smirked, remembering something Alenko mentioned a few times. Shepard had woken up for a few moments, asking for Garrus before she passed out once again. Chakwas was worried about her; she had never seen the Commander like this. Kaidan had explained what was going on, and neither of them knew what to do.

She glanced over her shoulder when she heard the doors open. Kaidan exited and moved up beside her. “We should have her moved into her room. There is nothing that can be done for her in the Med Bay,” he told her quietly. Garrus’ attention snapped toward them at the sound of their voices.

“How is she?” he asked them.

“She’s extremely overloaded, and there is nothing we can do for her,” Kaidan told him.

“How does she get rid of these overloads?” Garrus asked with concern.

“If she was more coherent, I would suggest finding an uninhabited planet and allowing her to go down there alone, but that is not feasible. What I don’t understand is how this happened,” he said, looking pointedly at Garrus and waiting for him to explain.

Garrus told them what happened and how he stepped in. “She heard you in that state?” Kaidan asked, shocked. Garrus nodded, looking unsure. Kaidan looked at him thoughtfully. “She should be moved to her room now,” he suggested, gesturing toward the doorway. Garrus watched as Alenko left with the doctor to grab some food.

Garrus entered the Med Bay and stopped, watching Shepard for a moment. He went over to her, lightly brushing a stray hair from her cheek; his talon lighting running along the soft skin. He marveled at the differences between them.

He watched as her face relaxed even more. Her eyes fluttered open, focusing on him and she gave him a small smile. One of her hands rose up from underneath the blankets and held his hand close to her cheek. Garrus watched as she drifted into a deeper, contented sleep; holding tightly to his hand.

He couldn’t deny his feelings for her anymore. His heart swelled at that one move and warmth flowed through him as he watched her. One word reverberated in his mind – mine.

He took his hand away softly so as not to disturb her further. She mumbled something beneath her breath that he couldn’t quite make out. As gently as he could he scooped her up. He knew she wouldn’t be happy knowing that she was being carried around. She hated appearing weak and he was sure others would see her that way if they viewed her in her current state. In actuality, nothing could be further from the truth.

He walked out into the Mess Hall, heading for her room. The area was empty and Garrus breathed a sigh of relief. He walked into her room, placing her gently on her bed. She grabbed his hand when he turned to go. “Don’t leave,” she whispered, still half asleep.

Garrus closed his eyes as warmth burned through him at her words. He wanted to stay more than anything, but what would the crew think? He didn’t know what to do as he stood there debating with himself. More than anything he wanted to stay, but this was a human ship. If they found out that a turian stayed with their Commander in her room, they might give her problems. With a sigh, he pulled his hand free and left her there to sleep alone.

Garrus went down to the Cargo Bay where the Mako was parked. He needed something to do to occupy himself or he knew he would end up in bed beside Shepard. He ignored everyone else that
was down here. Wrex was playing with his guns and Ashley was cleaning the party’s equipment. Garrus tried to focus on the Mako, but his mind kept wandering back to Shepard. He fought to stay away for several hours, but it was a losing battle. With a growl of frustration, he shoved away from the Mako. When he turned around, Wrex and Ashley were no longer working.

He went up to the Mess Hall to grab something to eat and found that the night crew was there eating, too. He was glad for the small distraction that would keep him from going to Shepard’s room. He took a seat with Wrex, and the krogan scowled at him. “Why aren’t you with Shepard?” Wrex asked, annoyed that Garrus was being a coward.

“She doesn’t need me there,” he stated coldly. Wrex gave a booming laugh at the lie. He didn’t know what Shepard saw in Garrus, but he personally found the turian amusing.

“You keep thinking that,” Wrex muttered, a grin on his face as Garrus shifted uncomfortably in his seat.

“This is a human ship,” he reminded the krogan.

“So, you’re not human,” Wrex shrugged, enjoying Garrus’ discomfort.

Garrus didn’t bother trying to explain himself; he simply glared at the krogan. Wrex chuckled with clear amusement. Garrus was about to leave, but Kaidan’s voice stopped him.

Kaidan took a seat next to Garrus, his expression grim. “We have a problem. The Council wants to talk with Shepard. I’ve been able to delay them for now. We need Shepard up and around soon, so I ordered Joker to set course for the Citadel,” he told them. Garrus was still waiting to hear what the problem was. Wrex looked at the human impatiently, waiting for him to continue.

When he didn’t, Wrex’s patience wore thin. “What’s the problem?” he growled.

“I need to know who Shepard’s lover is on the Citadel,” Kaidan muttered softly as embarrassment rushed through him. He couldn’t believe he was discussing this with them, but it was the only solution he could think of.

“And how are we supposed to know that?” Wrex asked belligerently. He was about to add a scathing remark, but Garrus’ growl stopped him. He looked toward Kaidan and noticed that he didn’t hear anything unusual. Wrex sat further back in his seat when Garrus’ territorial scent came to him. It burned his eyes and nose; he thought about ribbing the turian, but knew that would be a stupid move at the moment.

“Well, I thought one of you might know…” Kaidan trailed off, his face burning bright with embarrassment. “What about that turian? I don’t remember his name, but he was there one morning at Shepard’s apartment,” he muttered.

Wrex’s gaze swung to Garrus as his soft growls grew louder. He almost laughed out loud, but held it in for another time when he wouldn’t be in danger. He didn’t fear Garrus, but he knew if they got into a fight there would be damage done to the ship and he would have to face Shepard. That was the only thing that stopped him.

Kaidan heard a faint growl come from Garrus. He moved his chair away from the turian, no longer feeling particularly safe. Kaidan was about to ask once more, but the look of warning on Wrex’s face stopped him cold. Kaidan kept his mouth shut and wondered who else he could go to. There was no one that he knew of and that was a downfall right now. Shepard needed someone who knew her intimately and he wasn’t sure who that would be.

Everything Kaidan said was white noise, slowly fueling Garrus’ anger. The thought of Shepard touching another was too much for him to bear. He couldn’t control his territorial instincts, nor did he want to at the moment. Without thought he shoved his chair back roughly and headed for Shepard’s room.

Kaidan watched him storm off toward Shepard’s room, “I don’t think you’ll have to find Shepard’s lover,” Wrex chuckled. Kaidan snapped his gaze to the krogan.

“How long have they been…” he couldn’t quite finish the question, but he was curious to know the answer.

Wrex shrugged his shoulders; he was pretty sure that something happened between them before. The looks they exchanged when no one was looking gave that away. He knew there was more to their relationship than either one of them was willing to admit.
Shepard watched Garrus walk into the room with a small smile. She met his gaze when he stopped beside the bed. Garrus looked down at her; he could see whatever was happening to her was taking its toll. Slowly he reached out, brushing her hair from her face. She leaned into the touch with a contented sigh.

Garrus took a seat beside her on the bed and she didn’t move over to make more room. She curled herself into him, enjoying his presence. Garrus closed his eyes, trying valiantly not to take advantage of her. He so wanted to lie with her, but he was sure she wasn’t physically ready for that. She tried wrapping her arms around him, but it was too awkward in this position. Her mind and body were so close to exploding that it actually hurt. She could barely think clearly at the moment.

“Kaidan gave orders to head for the Citadel,” Garrus told her quietly. “He needs to know if you have a lover and who that might be.” He almost choked on those words, but he wanted to know. He wanted to help her, even if knowing the truth would further fuel his anger.

“Pallin, though we don’t keep in contact,” she mumbled. Garrus stared at her in shock when she said his former superior’s name. He would have never have guessed they were together, though he shouldn’t have been surprised.

“Can he help you?” Garrus asked, trying to keep the anger out of his voice. He didn’t want another touching her. However, if that is what she wanted, then he would keep his distance; even though it would be the hardest thing he had ever done.

“For this amount of energy, no. It would seriously harm him or anyone else,” she sighed. She knew what was going to happen and accepted it. Her body would burn out; she could feel the dark energy inside her growing as more time passed without release. Once her body burned out, it would be too late; the dark energy would take her life. She had been warned by other biotics about this, but never believed it until now.

“Shepard, what aren’t you saying?” Garrus asked urgently. The look in her eyes warned him something that he wouldn’t like was about to happen.

She reached up, cupping the side of his face lightly. He purred, nuzzling her hand. “Don’t worry about it. There is nothing you can do to change what will happen,” she mumbled. She didn’t want him to feel guilty. She had come to care for him more than she thought she would. The depth of her feelings for this turian surprised her.

She went to move her hand from him, but he held it to his face. His other hand ran along her skin tenderly; her eyes fluttered closed in pleasure as a sigh escaped her. Her body burned with another emotion, one she had never felt before. It was soothing, and welcoming at the same time. She reveled in that emotion, not fighting it.

“I’m not leaving. Tell me how to help you,” Garrus murmured, bringing his face close to hers. She fought with herself not to do anything, but she wanted his closeness - she wanted him. His blue eyes were soft and tender as he watched her. She couldn’t tear herself away from those eyes. She was so afraid of hurting him. She had too much energy in her and she knew there would be no pleasure for him if she succumbed to her desires. It would probably kill him, and she knew that would kill a piece of her, as well.

“There is nothing you can do. It’ll only hurt you and I won’t do that to you,” she told him in a firm voice, trying to break the spell that was enveloping them both.

“I think that’s my call, not yours,” Garrus stated firmly. He held her gaze firmly as he ran his talon along her neck slowly; over the bare skin of her upper chest. Her breath hitched at the feel of his hand. Shepard fought with herself not to reach out to him, to pull him close. Garrus could see the war waging inside her; everything was in her eyes. He knew he had to help her anyway he could. He wouldn’t be able to live with himself if he didn’t.

She took her hands from his face, balling then into fists at her side. The sheet was tightly clenched in her fist so she didn’t reach out and touch him as she yearned to. She saw his determination, and she couldn’t allow it. “Garrus, we can’t do this,” she stated adamantly.

Kaidan and Wrex sat at the table. Wrex was telling him the whole story of what happened on Noveria. He told him how Garrus had walked right up to Shepard and stopped her. How the blue
fire surrounding her didn’t harm him. Kaidan’s mouth dropped open as he listened. He couldn’t believe that Garrus wasn’t harmed by what he did.

“Are you sure?” Kaidan asked urgently.

“Of course I am! I was there, I saw it all,” Wrex spat, insulted that the human almost called him a liar.

Kaidan’s head whipped around when he heard his name being called from the Commander’s room. He knew why she wanted him in there. He looked at Wrex and nodded for him to follow. The krogan looked uncertain, but followed him into Shepard’s room.

She was lying in bed with the covers pulled up to her shoulders. Garrus was standing by the bed with a hurt expression; his anger was palpable on the air as he glared at the two intruders. When she started glowing, she had shoved him from the bed and yelled at him to leave. Garrus had heard the desperation in her voice; he moved to help her, but she had called for Kaidan. It infuriated him that she would call for someone else.

Kaidan took one look at the situation and knew his assumptions had been correct. Garrus was going to try and help her and Shepard thought she would harm him. Kaidan had one piece of information that would stop this. But he wasn’t sure if he should say anything; Garrus was an alien and Shepard was human. This was a human vessel and people would talk. He closed his eyes as he remembered some of the conversations that he had already heard on this ship. His mind made up, he took a step forward. “Shepard, there is something you need to know. Garrus walked into your energy without harm,” Kaidan said quickly, as he backed out of the room. He didn’t want to get involved with this.

Wrex had seen what was going on in the Shepard’s room and there was no way he was getting involved. A territorial turian was one thing that he didn’t want to add to his list of enemies. He knew if he harmed Garrus, then Shepard would be after him. So he was staying in the Mess Hall; let the human handle this.

“Kaidan, leave,” Garrus growled, turning angry eyes toward him. Kaidan didn’t need to be told twice; he exited immediately.

Garrus turned back to Shepard; she was looking at him in wonder. He moved to the bed. There was nothing to stop him now, and he wasn’t leaving. He sat back down on the bed, taking her in his arms without warning. Her slender arms slipped around his waist as she laid her head on his chest. “Why would you put yourself in danger like that?” she asked softly.

“I wasn’t in danger,” he told her. She lifted her head to look at him. He wanted to be with her, but he didn’t know what to do. The only time he had ever been with a human, it had been her. But that didn’t mean anything; he hadn’t done anything except touch her and take her.

Shepard could see his uncertainty. She was through arguing with herself about how bad of an idea this was. She wanted him. He wanted her and was able to touch her while she burned with dark energy.

Shepard reached up, pulling him to her; she didn’t have the strength to move too much. He moved so that he was partially lying on her, his weight supported by an arm near her shoulder. She flicked her tongue across his mandible. Garrus hissed as pleasure shot through him. It wasn’t the first time he felt another’s tongue there, but there was something different about being with her. He flared out his mandibles, giving her easier access.

He moaned low as he felt her suck one of them into her mouth. His plates shifted, opening wide with that one move. His three fingers laced themselves through her hair, his talons lightly scraping along her scalp. She shivered, her nails digging into the sensitive area beneath his fringe, and a shudder of pleasure raced through him. He groaned, pressing himself firmly against her soft body. Flashes of that night came to him; the look in her eyes as she leaned toward him when Chellick hadn’t been there. He looked at her eyes now, and saw the same look in them. He could see her desire and something else, as well. He wasn’t sure what it was, but he hoped it was the same feeling he had for her. He leaned down, licking her mouth as he seen Chellick do that night.

Her tongue met and tangled with his, coaxing it into her mouth. He tasted her, purring at the sweet taste. The feel of her tongue moving against his was too erotic for words. He couldn’t get enough of
her taste; he didn’t want to break the kiss. Neither did she, judging from the way she was gripping onto him; pulling him closer. Her legs shifted restlessly under the blankets that were trapped beneath him. Each movement brushed against him through his armor. He couldn’t feel it, but the image and thought of it was more than enough to make him harder.

She lightly bit his tongue, holding it in place for a moment. He melted against her as she sucked on it. His hips bucked against her body and the bed as pleasure shot through him. She let him go for a moment, and he stared at her in wonder. He had been with quite a few turian females, but never found pleasure like this. Everything she did shot more pleasure than he ever before encountered through him.

Shepard was in heaven; there was nothing but pleasure. She had never felt like this before, losing herself fully to someone. She didn’t want to stop exploring, but her biotics were burning through her, too. It was starting to dull some of the pleasure with its pain. She looked up at the Garrus, memorizing his face; the heated look in his eyes as he stared at her. “Garrus, I can’t hold back any longer,” she told him hoarsely.

Garrus saw the desperation in her eyes, and he heard the strain in her voice. He ran his hand down her skin where it disappeared under the blankets; he could see the faint blue glow. He stood up, removing the blankets from her, and his hand brushed against her as he did this. Her skin felt like it was on fire; he was worried that he would harm her when she was in this state. Her eyes pleaded with him as he stayed standing. He took her in, his gaze travelling over her body, memorizing it. Shepard watched as Garrus stripped out of his armor, leaving him in light clothing. Her breath caught as he removed those as well. He was well built for a turian; you could tell he was rarely behind a desk. He moved on top of her but didn’t touch her with his body. He held himself up with one arm while his other hand travelled along her body.

Garrus gazed in wonder at the sight beneath him, his hand following his gaze. He leaned down, tasting her skin and purred as she gasped. He took one of the mounds on her chest into his hand, flicking his talon over the peak carefully. He was curious about them; he had never seen bare breasts before. She cried out, clutching at him. He glanced up sharply, thinking he harmed her; but her face was flushed and her eyes had darkened. He grinned, his eyes never leaving hers as he did it again. Her back arched, thrusting the mounds more firmly in his hands. He kept his gaze locked with hers as he used his tongue on the peak. He growled in pleasure as she clutched his fringe in her hands. Garrus moved down her body, trying to find where the musky scent that was driving him crazy was coming from. He found the place between her legs. The scent was stronger as he spread her legs apart to make room for him. She watched him with heated eyes, and her body glowed a brighter blue. Garrus wasn’t afraid; he remembered what it felt like when he surrounded by her biotic energy. It had been very pleasurable.

Humans were so different from turians and he enjoyed the differences; he loved them, actually. He gazed down at the junction of her legs and saw it was glistening. He touched her lightly and she threw her head back, her hips thrusting toward his claw. His eyes widened at the danger of that move. He knew he could have seriously harmed her. He used his other hand to hold her hip securely so she couldn’t move.

He moved his claws more firmly over the flap of skin that had given him the best reaction. The musky scent was growing stronger, and her breathing had sped up as she moaned. His tongue darted out to taste her. She cried out, her body bucking against his hold; her most intimate part flooding with fluids. The musky smell drove him wild; it was intoxicating, and he couldn’t get enough of it. He buried his face in her folds, licking at her; purring at her taste.

“I have to let go! I can’t hold back anymore,” she panted breathlessly.

“Don’t hold back,” he mumbled against her sensitive flesh as he lost himself in the taste of her.

Shepard took him at his word; she dropped the control she had been fighting since the battle on Noveria. Her biotics washed over them both as he brought her to orgasm once more. Garrus growled and he moved above her, sheathing himself deep inside of her. He stayed still, not wishing to move as he felt her walls close around him, holding him tightly. His body begged for him to move, but he was reveling in the feel of her. He wanted to bask in this moment. Slowly he started moving, almost
removing himself before plunging back into her as deep as he could go. His hands were locked with hers beside her head; her long legs wrapped around his waist as they moved in unison. Her biotics flowed over them both, heightening their pleasure.

Garrus felt her muscles spasm around him; he thrust deeply within her, holding himself still until her body calmed down once more. This was different for him; by now he would be done with a turian female. They would be back at work, forgetting what had happened. With her, he wanted this to last as long as possible.

He wasn’t sure if he could finish this way. Sex between turians usually had the woman on all fours, her partner behind her. But he had placed himself on top of Shepard, something that was different for him. He kept a steady rhythm, trying not to lose control; wanting to be as gentle as possible. It was a fight he was slowly losing and he was afraid of harming her. “God, Garrus, don’t hold back,” she moaned. She wanted to feel him. She knew turians usually weren’t this tender with their lovemaking.

Garrus sat back as far as he was able so he wasn’t touching her. He could feel his legs spurs digging in his hardened skin; once again it was odd what he was willing to do to pleasure a human. She asked him not to hold back. He wanted to comply, but he wasn’t sure if she was up to it physically. She looked at him challengingly, her eyes full of biotic energy. Garrus grinned, reaching for her and pulled her to him roughly. Quickly he flipped her over so she was on her knees before him. He closed his eyes, trying to maintain control of himself. When he had control, he reopened them; his gaze travelling along her body.

Turians were a dominate species. They love having to fight for dominance. Seeing Shepard on her knees before him, with her ass pressing toward him, brought him immense pleasure. He slammed into her, his claws digging into her skin, drawing blood. She cried out; he thought he had harmed her, but she pleaded with him not to stop. He took her at her word. He drove himself into her relentlessly, his mouth watering as his pleasure grew. He could feel himself getting close to release. He pulled her off the bed, staying sheathed deep within her. Her head lay on his shoulder as he sunk his teeth into her soft skin. Her body convulsed around him as he found his release. Garrus stayed locked with her, holding her close. He growled the only word on his mind at the moment - “Mine”.

Shepard stiffened for a moment at that word. She knew turian culture; he was claiming her as his own. She wasn’t upset, nor was she disgusted, but he wasn’t getting off that easy. She met his gaze over her shoulder with a challenging look. “We’ll see about that,” she taunted. She knew that she just challenged him to prove himself.

Garrus was shocked for a moment, and then purred in pleasure at her words. Shepard smirked when she heard him purring. She was content, now that she was no longer in danger of losing herself. The next obstacle would be the reaction of the crew. She wasn’t sure how she was going to handle that one.
Chapter 14

Kaidan sat at a table in the Mess Hall with Wrex and Tali. “Has anyone seen Shepard this morning?” he asked. It wasn’t like her to be in bed this long. He wondered whether Garrus had been able to help her.

“No, I don’t expect to see the Commander for a while,” Wrex grinned, chuckling. The human looked at him in confusion for a moment before the meaning behind the krogan’s words sank in. Kaidan glowed at him; they were breaking so many Alliance regulations with their behavior. He wasn’t sure what to do. “You shouldn’t be happy about this. They could get into a lot of trouble for this,” Kaidan muttered.

“If you haven’t forgotten, Human, Garrus is a Turian and Shepard is a Spectre. The Alliance rules don’t apply to them,” Wrex sneered. This human annoyed him most of the time. He didn’t understand why Shepard kept him around. He had biotics, but he barely used them; and the Commander was better than Alenko any day. This human had no use; Wrex would prefer to drop him off somewhere and get him out of their away. Maybe they could send the other human with him – Ashley. Wrex would be very happy about that. That woman hated aliens and made no secret about it.

Tali kept quiet as she listened to them. She had heard the rumors that something serious had happened to the Commander. She didn’t know what happened, but what they were talking about made no sense to her. She was still an outsider of sorts to the rest of the crew. She knew why Shepard didn’t take her on missions and agreed with it. To please her new commander, she did her best on the engines of the Normandy.

She was worried for the Commander; Shepard was becoming a good friend. Tali didn’t want to see anything happen to her. She watched as Wrex scowled at Alenko; she smiled, knowing neither of them could see it. She thought he should be turning that look to Ashley, instead; that human hated aliens and made it well known. The other crewmembers had been leery when dealing with the new non-human arrivals, but most were now fine.

Garrus’ eyes flicked open as he lay on his side, facing the Commander. He smirked as he remembered the previous evening. He hadn’t planned on spending the night, but they had only fallen asleep a few hours before. He knew it was late for them to rise and hated waking her up, but they both needed to return to work. He thought about the ways he could wake her, but that would mean they would be in bed for hours more and that wasn’t a good idea.

Softly he ran his claw across her cheek; her eyes fluttered open slowly, looking over at him. “Time to get up already?” she mumbled sleepily, a small smile on her mouth. She searched Garrus’ face for any sign of regret, but she couldn’t see any. If she had to guess, she would say he looked contented as he watched her.

“Yeah, it’s late,” he muttered. He didn’t want to leave the bed.

“Figures; and I still need to contact the Council,” she grumbled. Garrus purred as he watched her stretch out her muscles. Her spine was bowed, thrusting out her milk glands toward him. He leaned down, licking the closest one. She moaned softly. “As much as I want to, we can’t,” she said, giving him a sad look.

Garrus left the bed before he did what he really wanted to do. Shepard got dressed, feeling a lot better than she had the previous day. Her overload wasn’t gone, but it was manageable. She moved over to Garrus, giving him a light kiss when he was finally dressed in his armor. They left her room; Shepard wore a cold, challenging look on her face, daring anyone to say something inappropriate.

Wrex saw the look and chuckled, and Kaidan turned his focus to the Commander. She looked a lot better than she had. Her color had returned, and her eyes were shining with happiness. He couldn’t be upset, but he worried what would happen if the Alliance or the Council found out.

She walked over, grabbing herself something to eat. Garrus left, heading down to the cargo bay. She took a seat with them. “I want an update on the ship,” she ordered, addressing Kaidan.
“We’re on course to the Citadel and will be there in four days’ time. The Council wants to speak with you. I informed them that you were injured. They wish for you to contact them as soon as possible,” Kaidan told her.

“I’ll do that once I am finished here,” she muttered, more to herself than anyone else. She really didn’t want to talk to them right now, but she knew she had no choice. She finished eating and gave Kaidan and Wrex a final look before heading into the conference room.

“Joker, patch me through to the Council,” she ordered. She didn’t need to wait long; almost instantly, three holo images stood in front of her.

“Commander, we heard that you were injured,” the Asari Councilor said.

“My biotics were overriding me, and I almost burnt out,” she told them. She watched as the Asari Councilor’s expression changed; she obviously understood her meaning. Her eyes widened, her gaze flicking to the other two Councilors. Shepard’s attention turned to the Turian. He was watching her intently, a searching look on his face.

“Did you receive my report?” she asked them. She wondered how long it would take for them to receive the report, since she had only sent it out a short while before coming to see them.

“We did, though we are worried about a decision you made. You set the Rachni queen free?” the Turian Councilor asked, astonished.

“Yes, I did,” she stated coldly.

“That was not your decision to make,” he snapped.

“Whether it was or not, there was no one else around to make that decision. The decision had to be made immediately. If we would have held her until the Council came up with a plan, those scientists might have taken more of her children to experiment on and that whole planet would have been overrun with hostiles. The queen wasn’t at fault here, so I decided not to wipe out a whole species,” Shepard stated adamantly.

The Salarian Councilor cut in. “The Council should have been notified!” he stated coldly.
Shepard took a deep breath to reign in her anger before she said something she might regret later. “She is right; the decision had to be made on site. The Rachni breed too fast and she couldn’t risk anymore experiments,” The Turian Councilor cut in. Shepard and the other two looked at him in shock.

The three of them nodded to her before two of them blinked out. The Turian Councilor met her gaze and held it for a few moments before shutting off his side of the holo conversation. He sat back in his chair, thinking about the repercussions of Shepard’s choice. He feared another war against them. He hoped she didn’t make her decision while thinking rashly. He thought about contacting her again, but decided to wait until she docked at the Citadel; where they could talk face to face, instead of through holo projection. With determination, he went in search of the Asari Councilor to find out what Shepard meant when she said she had almost burnt out.

He found her sitting behind her desk on a video call. He waited patiently until she noticed him. She looked up at him, shocked for a moment before motioning him to take a seat. “What did Shepard mean ‘she almost burnt out?’” he asked her.

The Asari Councilor gave him a searching look, wondering why he would want to know. It wasn’t like he had a soft spot for humans. Out of the three of them, he hated humans the most. She took her time before answering, trying to figure out why he stood up for Shepard. “It means that she almost died. Her biotics overloaded and she couldn’t release it, so it built up within her body. Human bodies weren’t made to handle large amounts of biotics, so in the end it would have killed her,” she explained. Her eyes widened when she saw his hands bunch into fists in his lap.

She watched as he nodded curtly; leaving without another word. She looked at her empty door in confusion. She had never seen the Turian act this way before; a part of her was worried, but she shrugged it off for the moment.

The Turian Councilor took a seat at his desk, shaken. He had never heard of a condition like what the Asari Councilor mentioned. He tried to shrug off his irrational fear, but couldn’t. When she said that Shepard could have died, his blood froze for a few moments.
The next several days past slowly for Shepard as she stayed in her office most of the time. She wasn’t sure why she had to see the Turian Councilor when she already spoke with the Council. She supposed she should be used to their political maneuvers by now.

She thought about Garrus for a moment; they hadn’t been intimate since he had helped her. Through mutual agreement, they kept their relationship semi-innocent. What happened that night had been too fast; they both knew it, but there was nothing that could have been done. She was on death’s doors and he saved her. She wasn’t sure what her feelings for him were, but they were comforting.

She turned her attention to the datapad in front of her. It was Alenko’s mission brief from the last planet they visited. She couldn’t believe she had allowed him to drive. The man almost got them killed, he was so careful. What she wanted to do was take over driving, but that would have definitely killed them.

She tossed that to the side and picked up one that was buried beneath the pile. She furrowed her brow when she saw it was for the Mako. This wasn’t normal. She read it over slowly and groaned. It seemed they needed to order some more parts or the Mako would be out of commission. Damn! That’s not what she wanted to read. Garrus gave a detailed list of damages the Mako sustained on each mission, and which parts were used to keep it running.

Garrus leaned against the Mako with a sigh; he finally fixed the cannon. It had taken hours, but after the damage it had sustained on the last mission, he wasn’t surprised. For all his bitching about Shepard’s driving, he couldn’t complain anymore. Alenko had been driving this time and the Mako was in worse shape than it had ever been. The human was too careful of a driver; they had taken every shot from the enemy. He was surprised they hadn’t been blown to bits.

He glanced around the room. The other two were gone, letting him know that it was supper time. He knew Shepard would be in her office working.

Shepard glanced over her shoulder when her door opened. She smirked as she waved the datapad at Garrus. “Do you have any idea where we will get these parts?” she asked him.

“I have a few ideas, though it’s going to be costly,” he told her.

“Oh I have no doubt about that. Looks like I’ll have to talk to Anderson and see what he can do,” she shrugged, placing the datapad back on the desk.

She glanced at the clock and noticed that it was supper time. He pulled her to her feet when her hands were empty. He bent over to where his bite was, taking in his scent mixed with her own and purred.

~oooooooo~

Shepard stood in front of the Turian Councilor, waiting for him to say what was on his mind. A thick silence had descended, and she shifted uncomfortably. If this was the way the meeting was going to go, she didn’t want to be here. She could be at the Flux or Chora’s having a few drinks before they left again.

“How are you feeling now?” he asked, finally breaking the awkward silence that had descended. “Fine,” she answered automatically. She wasn’t about to tell him that she was still overloaded, nor about the nightmares she was having once again. The images that had been burnt in her skull were in her dreams, making sleep virtually impossible.

The Turian Councilor watched her intently; he could see that she was lying, that there was something bothering her. He moved around his desk, placing himself in front of her. Shepard met his eyes squarely. His gaze had a weight to it that made her uncomfortable; she wanted to shift in place, but forced herself to stay absolutely still.

He reached out one of talons, lightly tracing a fading bruise on her cheek, close to her eye. She didn’t back away from the touch; it didn’t have an intimate air about it, but there was something strange to it. “What happened?” he asked.

“Benezia threw me off a catwalk. I hit my face on the floor below and lost control,” she answered him.

“Lost control?” he asked, looking at her curiously.

“Never mind, it’s not important,” she muttered quietly. She didn’t want to have this discussion with anyone. It wasn’t her usual loss of control; what happened on Noveria was something more. It still
scared her, reliving her thoughts and feelings of that time. He moved closer; the sadness that he saw in her eyes bothered him. He cupped her cheek in one hand; he wanted to erase that look in her eyes. He was trying to show her comfort the way he saw it in the human videos. Her eyes hardened as she glared at him. “Don’t even think about it,” she hissed vehemently.

“Shepard….,” he started, but stopped when he was cut off by her. “Not interested!” she spat coldly. He watched as she made to storm out of office, and he wondered where he made his mistake.

His hand tangled in her hair. “Don’t push it, Human. Don’t read something more into this than there is,” he snapped coldly.

“If that wasn’t what you were trying for, then what were your intentions?” she asked calmly. She knew how easy it was to misinterpret actions, especially across various species.

The Turian Councilor glared at her for a few moments and wondered if he should tell her. In his culture it could be a sign of weakness, but in hers it wasn’t. Bracing himself for scorn, he continued. “I saw sadness in your eyes so I tried to comfort you,” he told her. He sounded like an idiot, even to himself. He tried to make a connection with her and he messed up. He had read the literature, and he had watched the videos, but they all had been wrong.

“If you were my lover, mate or close family member that would have been fine; but since you are none of those, I would suggest a hand on the shoulder,” she told him with a small smile, trying to ease the tension in the room.

“I’ll remember that,” he answered gruffly.

“Don’t feel bad. I made some very awkward mistakes when I met your kind,” Shepard said, grinning as she remembered one in particular. He looked at her expectantly; after making a fool of himself, he actually needed to hear this. He watched as she rolled her eyes.

“Before the first time Chellick and I were together, we were in his office joking back and forth. Among humans, we would lightly yank someone’s hair to torment them or get a rise out of them. So not thinking, I did the same to his fringe,” she grumbled and blushed. His eyes widened and his mandibles twitched as he held in his laughter. So, Commander Shepard felt up a Turian she barely knew. Well, it was worse than what he did, but not by much.

He wanted to show her that he was learning about her species; that he was trying to keep an open mind now about humanity. Though there were a few beliefs he still held firm. Humans were moving too fast; some of them were pushy, obstinate and only thought of themselves. But then there was Shepard. She was showing him another side to humans, a side that he was starting to respect.

“You said there was something important. That is why you wanted me here in person,” she muttered, hoping he would allow her to change the subject. Silently he swore; he had gotten so side tracked that he forgot to hand her that datapad. He turned to his desk, taking the datapad from it. He was still hesitant of handing this to her. It was everything they had on Saren; all his mission and reports, his personal life. Even the times that the Council had covered for him. He was about to show Shepard something that only the Council had ever seen.

“You’ll want to read this over. You can’t leave with the datapad, nor can you copy it. If you need information from it, contact me and I’ll give it to you. You can take a seat and read while I finish my paperwork for the night,” he told her as he passed it over to her.

Her eyes widened as she took the pad. She didn’t know what it contained, but whatever it was must be very sensitive. She sat in the chair; he left her alone for a few minutes, trusting her not to make a copy. She thought about doing it, but knew she wouldn’t. It hadn’t been easy getting this turian’s trust and she wasn’t about to fuck it up.

The top line blazed out at her – Saren. This was his file, everything they had on him. She read over his personal history quickly; there were a few interesting points, but nothing that jumped out at her. She read over his military records and she could see why he was chosen to be a Spectre.

She glanced up when the Turian Councilor walked in with a mug of coffee. She grinned, giving him a nod. She turned her attention back to the data pad. The more she read about his role in the Spectres, the more the fact that he went rogue made sense. She glared at the Turian that sat across from her.
She couldn’t understand why they had doubted her. Sure, she was accusing their best operative, but the way he became the best irked her.

The Turian Councilor watched her closely. He knew she hadn’t come to the part he wanted her to see. He wasn’t sure what she would say or do. While she read, he made her coffee; remembering how she made it the last time she was here. His head snapped up when he heard her hiss. Her eyes started glowing blue, and her body had a very faint blue light to it. A part of him worried about his safety, but he hoped she wouldn’t do anything. She lifted her eyes and pinned him with a lethal stare.

“You knew Saren was dirty back then and you disbelieved me. Look at what he did to become your top Spectre. How many bribes, threats, or assassinations was it going to take before you finally opened your eyes?” she hissed coldly.

“I don’t know. But after everything that has happened, I thought you should see this. So you would know what you are going up against. Now you know what Saren is and what he is capable of, so don’t hesitate,” he told her quietly.

She turned back to the datapad, her eyes widening when she read more. Captain Anderson’s name popped out at her. The same story he told her was here. The Council knew Saren was at fault, but they did nothing. Anderson could have been a Spectre if the Council hadn’t covered up for Saren. The Turian Councilor knew what part she was at by the look on her face. She turned cold eyes to him and her hand burned with dark energy. “I know what you are thinking, but that wasn’t why we refused your former commander. Anderson wasn’t made for the Spectres; he didn’t have what it would take to last. He wanted to protect humanity only; he didn’t care about the rest of the races. He wasn’t prejudiced, but he would always place humans first. If we would have stated a flat out ‘no’, the political repercussions would have damaged human and alien relations. So we used him as a scape goat,” he explained quickly. It sounded worse out loud than it did in his mind. Back then it made sense; now he wasn’t so sure.

“So you used Anderson as a scape goat to save face? Politically the reasoning is sound, but Captain Anderson is a friend of mine. Because of what you did, his life is harder; thanks to Udina. You expect me to understand, and I do. But can I accept it? No, I can’t,” she told him softly. He closed his eyes; it was better than what he had been expecting. He thought he would have had to call in security to protect him. She turned her attention back to the datapad. He wasn’t too worried about the rest of the information. They both knew what Saren was now, and she knew what the Council had covered up for him.

Shepard set down the datapad, trying to take in everything she had read. It was shocking that he was showing her this. Basically, he just aired out the Council’s dirty laundry. “Can I make a copy of one section?” she asked him.

“I already told you no,” he stated.

“It’s not his history; it’s his businesses and property. That is the only information that I need,” she told him hastily.

“I’ll send it to your personal extranet once we find them all. I am still in the middle of processing his properties,” he told her.

She nodded, not wanting to push her luck. She watched him over the rim of her coffee mug as he went into his drawer and reached for something beneath his desk. He tossed her another datapad, along with a box he placed gently on the desk. Shepard took the datapad and scanned over the contents; it was a message from Nihlus to her. She would read this on her personal time when no one was around. She opened the box and found his two favorite guns. One gun was a hand canon and the other was his sniper rifle. Shepard ran her hand along the barrel of the rifle.

“Why are you giving me this?” she asked quietly. The Turian Councilor watched her, seeing so many emotions pass over her face that he couldn’t read them all.

“From his message I knew he would want you to have them,” he told her. “There is one other thing.” He passed her a disk; she took it from him hesitantly, not sure why he was doing this now. “You should head back to your ship so you can have some privacy to look at those,” he stated.

“No. I’m sleeping in a comfortable bed, instead of the narrow one in my quarters,” she grinned. She rose to her feet and walked around his desk, standing beside him. He watched her, not sure what she
was about to do. If she was about to show him a way humans showed appreciation, he wasn’t sure how he was to respond. Their meeting had gone well and he didn’t want to mess it up. She held out her hand for his; he went to take hers, but she grasped his forearm. This he understood. He rose to his feet, grasping her forearm in a show of respect. Their eyes met and for the first time, he shared a silent moment of understanding with a human. He watched her walk out of his office with a small smile.

He punched in a number on his communications terminal and gave orders to the person on the other end. He grinned, wondering what Shepard would do when she found out.

~ooooooooo~

Garrus sat in Chora’s Den, enjoying a few drinks. He thought he would see Shepard here, and was surprised when she didn’t show up. Wrex was at the bar, starting to become belligerent with the bartender. Garrus wasn’t surprised, but he knew if a fight started they would call for Shepard. With a scowl on his face he walked over to Wrex. “Better keep your temper. If you lose it, they will call in Shepard,” Garrus warned him.

“They won’t let me drink, since they are blaming me for killing Fist,” Wrex growled, his voice dangerously low.

Garrus turned to the barkeep. “You better hope Shepard doesn’t hear about this,” he muttered. He knew using her name would work; she was in here often enough and they knew how she was. “Why would she care?” the Turian barkeep asked irritably.

“She’s part of her crew,” Garrus grinned as the other Turian made a startled noise.

“What am I not going to like?” a cold voice said from behind Garrus. Garrus closed his eyes and groaned; he couldn’t imagine a worse time for her to arrive.

“He won’t serve me because I killed Fist,” Wrex stated coldly.

“Funny, I thought you saved him after what I did to him,” Shepard stated, meeting the bartender’s eyes. His gaze flicked to the krogan for confirmation and he was shocked to see that the krogan had paled. That was a huge indicator that he didn’t want to ask what happened. He passed out the drinks, hoping the krogan wouldn’t be sitting at the bar.

Garrus and Shepard moved off to one of the empty tables with a grin. The sat there quietly, watching the other crew members. “How did the meeting go with the Councilor?” Garrus asked.

“Not as I expected. He handed me a few things that belonged to Nihlus,” she told him. Garrus felt irrational anger come over him when he heard Nihlus’ name.

He grunted his answer; anything else that would have come out of his mouth wouldn’t have been prudent. Shepard was about to say more and then stopped when someone stood in front of her table. She looked up to see Chellick standing there.

Her eyes widened, and she didn’t know what to say. Garrus growled low in his throat as he saw Chellick, but he kept his marking scent in check. Shepard hadn’t accepted him yet, so he had no right to do that.

“Shepard,” Chellick nodded.

“Chellick, what can I do for you?” she asked calmly, trying to contain her anger.

He turned his attention to Garrus when he heard the growl. “I am not here to fight. I’m actually here to apologize,” he muttered, not taking his gaze off of Garrus.

Garrus met his unflinching gaze with one of his own. He made sure Chellick would see the warning in his eyes. “No fighting between the two of you,” Shepard said calmly.

“As I said, I am not here to fight. I came to apologize for the way I treated you,” Chellick murmured softly. He looked at the human in front of him and was shocked that he didn’t feel the burning desire for her that he had grown accustomed to. She was just another human to him; not something he lusted after. Pallin told him he was addicted to her. At first he thought Pallin was ‘full of bullshit’, to quote a term from Shepard. But now he had his proof. What he mistook was love was an addiction to her biotics.

“Thank you for apologizing, but it will not change anything between us,” she said pointedly. She hoped he wasn’t expecting to get into her pants once again, for old times’ sake.

“I know, and I never expected anything; but I needed to do this all the same,” he muttered, rubbing
his fringe in agitation. “Anyway, I’ll leave you to your night,” he nodded and walked away. She turned her attention to the rumbling Turian across from her. “That was just odd,” she mumbled with a shake of her head. “You can stop growling anytime. He’s gone.” Shepard chuckled as Garrus’ gaze swung to her.

“Sorry,” he mumbled. He leaned back in his seat and watched Shepard finished off her drink. He wanted to be with her tonight, but wasn’t sure how to go about asking her. He was still uneasy; their night together had been for help only and nothing more. Her challenge still played in his mind, but that was said in the heat of passion; he wasn’t sure if she meant it or not.

“Anyway, I’m heading to my apartment to relax,” she told him as she rose from her seat. Garrus followed her out of the bar, walking with her until they reached the door of her apartment. He didn’t feel comfortable asking and she hadn’t given him permission to enter. This wasn’t like her quarters on the Normandy. This was her personal space.

“I’ll meet you on the Normandy tomorrow,” Garrus said, trying to hide his unease. She stopped at the door and turned to him. He wasn’t sure if he was reading what he saw in her eyes right. It looked like disappointment.

“Yeah, okay. Once all the deliveries are made, we will be heading out,” she mumbled, trying to hide the displeasure that welled within her. She wasn’t going to force the issue by asking him to join her for the night. That would only place him in an awkward position, since at the moment she was his commanding officer.

Shepard watched Garrus walk away, slowly being swallowed up by the throng of pedestrians, and then walked into her lonely apartment. She looked at her home and it felt empty to her; with a sigh she headed back to the Normandy. She couldn’t sleep on the Citadel anymore. The Normandy was quiet. Only a skeleton crew remained on board while the rest were out for the evening. She walked into her quarters and stopped dead. Her eyes widened as she took in the new bed. Where the hell it came from she didn’t know, and how it got on the ship was a mystery to her.

She walked over to the large bed; it could hold her and another very comfortably. In this one, you would never feel like you were going to fall off the edge, as it had been with her and Garrus on the other bed.

She walked to the cockpit and found Joker there. “Do you know of anything being place in my quarters?” she asked him.

“You mean that huge bed?” he asked with a wicked grin.

“Uh, yeah, that would be it. Know anything about it?” she asked.

“All I know is some Turian came and delivered it; removing the other one you had in there. Oh, and maybe this will shed some light,” he grinned, passing her a datapad. She knew he already read what was on it.

“So, Commander, is this a new way of strengthening human and Turian relations?” Joker grinned unrepentantly.

“Good question, since it was the Turian Councilor that had it delivered,” she said and chuckled as Joker gaped at her.

“I thought he hated humans? What did you do?” Joker asked.

“Beats me, but I am not complaining,” Shepard shrugged as she left him there, heading back to her quarters.

She sent a quick message to the Turian Councilor, asking him to get in touch with her. She wasn’t sure how long she would have to wait before he answered. She went to her closet and grabbed her night wear, pretty sure she wouldn’t be talking to him until morning.

She was just slipping her tank top on when Joker interrupted her. “Commander, you have a transmission,” Joker said. She could hear the laughter in his voice and knew who it was.

“Send it to my quarters,” she replied. She sat at her desk and wondered for a moment if she would be offending him with her attire.

His holo image popped up on her desk. “You wanted to speak with me?” he questioned casually.

“I had a surprise waiting for me when I entered my quarters,” she said and raised a brow, waiting for him to fill in the blanks. She could see the grin on his face.
“What might that have been?” he asked, his voice so controlled that she couldn’t detect the mirth that was in that grin.

“A bed,” she stated succinctly. “I have a datapad that says you sent it to the Normandy.”

“You said you weren’t comfortable on your other one. Was that all there was?” he asked. Shepard narrowed her eyes and glanced around her room. Nothing seemed out of place. She turned her eyes back to the Councilor and wondered what he was talking about.

The Turian Councilor watched as she searched her room from her seat. He could see by the look on her face that there was nothing else out of the ordinary. He worried for a moment that the other object had been forgotten or ended up in the possession of whoever delivered it. He was about to make another call, but stopped when he heard her gasp. Her face lit up, and she had a huge grin on her face.

She turned her attention back to him; she couldn’t believe what the other ‘thing’ was. Across the room, near the entrance, was a new coffee machine. Now she was in heaven! She didn’t have to wait for the one in the Mess Hall or taste old coffee. She actually had her very own machine.

She turned her attention back to the Councilor, wondering why he did this. She was almost positive that he had an ulterior motive, but she couldn’t see what it would be.

He watched her, smiling as she found the coffee pot. This was the first time in all their interactions that he saw a true smile on her face. Her face lit up; there was no strain or hidden emotions. He knew that she was genuinely happy. A part of him filled with pride that he put that smile on her face. Another part, one that he needed to ignore, wanted to see that smile in person, as he put it on her face.

He still didn’t know what drove him to do this for her. With his reputation for hating humans it wouldn’t make sense. Shepard may be a human, but he was starting to look at her as a friend.

“Thank you,” she murmured. He smiled, hearing the pleased note in her voice.

“Good night, Shepard. Enjoy the coffee,” he grinned before cutting off communications. He sat back in his chair and looked at the next report he would be sending Shepard. It was regarding Feros, the next planet Shepard would be visiting. There wasn’t much to go on, since the settlement hadn’t been sending regular reports. Even before he met Shepard, he had sent someone to investigate the problem. What they discovered didn’t sit well with him. The settlers were under constant attack from the geth; so much so that the operative couldn’t give him too much information.
They left the Citadel later than Shepard wanted, but getting the parts for the Mako had been a trial. The human embassy wanted her to pay for it and she didn’t have the funding for that. With some persuasive talking, they finally relented to footing the bill.

Finally, after a week of bureaucratic hassles they were on their way to Feros. She leaned back in her chair, going over the information that the Turian Councilor sent her. It wasn’t much, but there was enough to worry her. This mission was going to be hell, she knew. Geth had basically taken over the planet, the settlers weren’t talking and Saren had a large lead on them. It annoyed her to no end; she just hoped that the Turian Councilor wouldn’t request her presence back on the Citadel after this mission. She wasn’t sure if she could follow that order, even if it came. Saren was too big of a threat. The last two information packets he had sent helped a lot, and made the missions easier. This time they were walking into the mission blind and that irked her. She sighed, tossing the datapad back on her desk and grabbing herself another coffee.

The disk she had been avoiding caught her eye. She picked it up carefully and placed it in her computer. Nihlus’ face looked back at her as he spoke. She may not have known him well, but she missed him. He understood her. He understood that the job came first. Now she’d met another Turian that was the same. She smiled sadly as she listened. This was his good bye, made the night she told him that she had a bad feeling about Eden Prime.

The message drew to a close and she turned it off, closing her eyes and picturing him as he was when he was with her. With a final sigh, she said a silent good bye to a good friend.

She glanced at the second disk and left it alone. A noise behind her startled her. She glanced back to see Garrus, and she wasn’t surprised to find him there. Just seeing him brought a smile to her face. Garrus had seen the message from the other Turian. He wasn’t sure who he was, but he could see that it had an effect on Shepard. A low rumbling growl escaped him, but she hadn’t heard it. It was too low for human ears. He wasn’t sure who this Turian was to Shepard and that worried him. At first he thought that Turian was a rival, but his words didn’t come across that way. It seemed more like a farewell.

“How’s the Mako?” Shepard asked, breaking him out of thoughts.

“How was that?” he asked. He could hear the possessive rumble still in his voice and flinched. He couldn’t allow his anger to show; couldn’t treat her like a mate. She hadn’t accepted him yet, and a part of him wondered if she ever would.

“That was Nihlus,” she answered softly. “The Turian Councilor gave this to me.”

“That’s Nihlus,” he murmured thoughtfully. “Why did he send you the message? I thought....” he trailed off, realizing where that comment would lead and that it was none of his business.

“We were friends before I was even assigned to the Normandy, then we became lovers. The night before Eden Prime I told him I had a bad feeling about the mission. At first I didn’t think he believed me, but he had. He made this message for me. It was a farewell, of sorts,” she told him softly. Garrus wasn’t sure what to say. He didn’t like that she and Nihlus had been intimate, but he couldn’t say much. A part of him wondered how deep their relationship had been. She didn’t look broken up from watching the message, but it had definitely bothered her.

He walked over to her, taking her hand into his. He stared down at their hands; so different, but still so right for each other. “Do you think the Mako will be fixed by the time we reach Feros?” she asked.

She was trying to change the subject; she obviously didn’t want to talk about the past. “Not unless I get help with it,” he muttered, running his free hand over his fringe in irritation.

“Get whoever you need. The Mako takes priority. We need it for missions and until it’s fixed, we’re stuck,” she stated.

“I’ll see who will be willing to help once I grab something to eat,” he said with a smirk. She
glowered at the pointed look he gave her.
“I’m not hungry,” she protested; her arms folded across her chest, and a belligerent look on her face. Garrus smirked and left her standing there. She wasn’t sure what to make of this turn of events. He usually didn’t leave so easily. Usually it wasn’t until she was stuffed that he finally left. She grinned to herself, happy that she had won this round.
She turned back to her computer, checking out the new missions that had been handed to her. She planned on doing them as soon as they were done with Feros. The mission for Luna would be her first priority. That mission worried her. It involved a rogue AI that had access to a training facility and secret military information. There was nothing good about it, as far as she was concerned. The other missions that were listed could wait. They were important, but Saren was far more so. She didn’t understand why they wanted her to waste her time on anything else. Any Alliance officer could go; it would be easier for them to go. She would not ignore the requests from the Council, however, since they were signing her paycheck.
She was about to pull up more information on the planets of the other missions, but she didn’t get a chance. A plate of food was placed in front of her. Behind her stood a scowling turian, arms crossed over his chest and a challenging look in his eyes. “Eat,” he ordered, picking up his own plate.
“Garrus, why do you always make sure I’m eating?” she asked, irritation shining in her eyes.
“If I don’t, when will you eat?” he asked nonchalantly. She went to answer, but couldn’t come up with a believable one. She was well known for missing meals, even though it was the worst possible thing for her. When she was on leave she remembered to eat, but while on missions, eating was the last item on her list. She turned her gaze back at the mountain of food and smirked. He had won this round and knew it, if his smug look was anything to go by. She narrowed her eyes at him when he leaned closer to her, and she felt his breath fanning her now heated skin. “Also, I’m answering your challenge,” he whispered. A gasp she had been trying to hold in escaped her; he leaned forward and his tongue flicked out, tasting her lips as he purred. He was enjoying the stunned look on her face.
He could sense her desire and forced himself not to press further. He tasted her as her tongue met his; and he growled in pleasure as she moaned, leaning closer to him.
She moved lithely so that she was straddling his lap, forcing him to sit back in his chair. He growled in pleasure, his claws digging into her sides as she nipped her way down the sensitive part of his neck. “Shepard, we need to stop,” he stated, but his own voice betrayed him; coming out in a rumbling purr.
“Why?” she asked, meeting his gaze.
Garrus met her gaze squarely; he searched her eyes and saw what she was feeling. But he couldn’t allow this, not until she admitted it. He wanted her for a mate. He didn’t want to be another turian that she would sleep with. He needed more than that.
Shepard shifted uncomfortably under his scrutiny, but she held herself defiantly. She wasn’t sure if she wanted to hear what he had to say. His body was telling her one thing, but the look in his eyes told her something else. She was worried that he didn’t want to be with her again, and that he was about to shove her away; even though his body enjoyed her. Then she actually thought about it and wondered why he called her mate. So she sat there waiting, trying not to allow any of her turmoil to show.
“What is it?” she asked and began to move off of his lap. His hands clutched her sides, giving her hope.
“I won’t be just another turian that you bed. I want more than that,” he stated, waiting for her to say something. She gave him a searching look, not sure how to answer or what to say.
He let her go when she slipped off his lap and he watched as she started pacing. He sat there and waited. He thought about leaving and knew that he should. He rose to his feet, preparing to leave and give her space, but he suddenly found that he couldn’t do it. He wondered how many people left without a fight. It was something he had come to realize over time. Shepard didn’t need someone that would bow to her. She needed an equal, someone who could stand up to her. He brought her food and made sure she ate, even when she gave him a hard time. But when it came to making his feelings known, he always went to the Mako to give her time.
She paced the confines of her room, acutely aware of the fact that Garrus was there. She knew she had deep feelings for him, but she wasn’t sure what those feelings were. She didn’t have a name for them. She worried that he would become as possessive as Chellick; not allowing her to even speak to other turian males.

She was so deep in thought that she hadn’t noticed that Garrus had left his chair until she found herself pinned against the wall. She gasped, startled when she looked into his eyes. She thought she would find anger, but it wasn’t there. He was looking at her challengingly, almost taunting her to try and push him away. This was a first for her; a male challenging her like this. The fact that he wasn’t going to allow her to shove him away made the blood burn in her veins. If he would have used anger as a warning, it would have been easier to refuse him.

Garrus smirked when he saw the surprise in her eyes. He scented the air, purring as he smelled her reaction. He leaned down to her shoulder, his tongue tracing the mark he had left there; purring as he tasted his scent. “What do you want?” he growled against her skin.

“You,” she moaned.

“It’s a start,” he murmured, meeting her desire-filled eyes with his own.

She smirked, enjoying this side of him; it wasn’t often that someone challenged her. “A start?” she asked, raising a brow. She was about to say more, but the feel of his sharp teeth grazing against her skin stole her breath away.

“I’m not giving up,” he murmured, and grinned when he saw her eyes narrow in suspicion.

“Garrus, I am not going to deal with another possessive male, who bellows whenever there is another male turian near me,” she stated heatedly.

Garrus searched her face, wondering where this declaration came from. He hesitated for a moment, and then it dawned on him. “I’m not Chellick, so don’t accuse me of his wrong doings!” he snarled heatedly.

“And if I allow you to place your scent on me, you won’t become territorial?” she scoffed, moving away from him.

“I know you are around other turian males; the Turian councilor and even Pallin, when needed. That I can accept. However, I won’t make the same promise if another turian puts his challenging scent on you again,” he stated heatedly.

She hesitated in her argument. She believed what he said; that he wouldn’t do the same thing Chellick had done. He understood. She smiled softly as another thought dawned on her. All this time, he’d been fighting his nature and not forcing his scent on her. She moved toward the angry turian, who was rumbling softly. She stood on her toes, brushing a soft kiss across his mandibles.

“Thank you,” she murmured as he wrapped his arms around her.

~oooooooooo~

Feros was just as she expected it would be. Geth were everywhere and the last remaining survivors were holed up in the small settlement of Zhu’s Hope. If she would have waited longer getting to this planet, she wasn’t sure if they would have survived.

Garrus walked beside her as she talked to the people, trying to gain more intel on their situation. Wrex walked behind them; covering their backs, as always. “So, what do you guys make of this?” she asked them quietly.

“The humans are lucky if you ask me, but there’s something not right here,” Wrex muttered.

“Yeah, I know the feeling,” she scowled. “We need to get to those labs and see if there are more answers there.”

“The settlement should be fine now. We’ve cleared out all the nearby Geth, we’ve got the water going for them and now they can hunt. That should be good enough until we get back,” Garrus told her, trying to ease her concerns.

“Let’s hope so,” she sighed, leading the way to the elevators.

“You don’t think they will be?” Garrus asked, reading her easily.

“I don’t know. Something about this place strikes me as odd. Garrus, there is something going on here that’s not right,” she stated harshly.

He gave her a searching look. He didn’t have the intuition that she had, but he was learning by
following her. If she said something was off, then he believed it. “So, what are our orders, Shepard?” he asked, looking at her expectantly.

“Joker?” she called, contacting the Normandy.

“Read you, Shepard,” he answered as he sat in his chair. He was surprised to hear from her. He glanced at Pressly as he listened intently.

“I want constant readings to be taken of the remaining survivors of Zhu’s Hope. Something is wrong down here,” she ordered.

“Anything I should be looking for? Should I have doctor Chakwas go out and run a medical scan on them?” Joker asked. His body was on alert, now that there was a possibility that there could be danger. If Shepard was concerned, then so was he. She didn’t make mistakes.

“No. No one is to leave the ship unless I state otherwise,” she barked out the order.

“I’ll have constant scans run of the people and the area for anything unusual and inform you immediately if I find anything,” he stated.

“Good. Shepard out,” she said. She left the com open, just in case Joker needed her.

“What do you think is going on?” Pressly asked worriedly.

“Don’t know, but whatever it is, Shepard is worried about it,” Joker muttered. They shared a concerned glance before turning back to their stations.

Pressly turned to the two people working near him. “I want two guards on the airlock,” he ordered. If Shepard said something was wrong with Zhu’s Hope, he wasn’t taking any chances. That woman had been right too many times to argue. He was worried now, but he knew Shepard would never leave the ship unprotected if there was a problem. He was glad some of her ground team was still aboard; but two of them were usually on board, so he wasn’t sure how good they actually were in combat.

He glanced up when he saw Lieutenant Alenko. “What’s the problem?” he asked when he saw the worried look on Pressly’s face.

“Shepard thinks there is a problem with the refugees of Zhu’s Hope. She ordered Joker to run scans on the people and area,” he told him. “I’ve placed guards on the airlock as a precautionary measure.”

“Does she want more of the ground team out there?” he asked. He was starting to feel cooped up.

“No. Her orders are that no one is to leave the ship,” Pressly informed him.

Kaidan sighed, not impressed that he was stuck in the ship. He had hoped he would be out fighting, but that didn’t look like it was happening. He understood why she took Wrex; he was as good as a tank. And if she was fighting Geth, she would need someone with his strength. He left CIC, heading back to fix the monitor that was once again acting up. The thing had been on the fritz since they boarded and he’d been trying to get it working properly ever since.

~oooooooo~

Shepard grinned when she saw a Mako in the transportation area of the settlement. “You’ve got to be kidding me,” Garrus groaned.

“Nope. Now I’m going to have fun,” she chuckled as she climbed on board. “Spirits save us,” Garrus muttered as he scowled at her. “No running over Geth,” he added.

“Is that an order?” she asked silkily, and her eyes flashed in warning that he had just overstepped his bounds.

“No, Commander,” he answered automatically; his years of training kicking in.

“Good,” she said and motioned then toward the Mako. “Wrex, you have the gun. Garrus, you’re on shields.”

Well, she could honestly say that this was the most fun she had ever had driving a Mako. Garrus’ curses and Wrex’s grumbles were music to her ears. It reminded her of one the training simulations she went through to learn how to drive the heavy machines. She had been taught to dodge obstacles while trying to take out the enemy and not damage the Mako. She remembered how her instructor had been horrified with her driving; but he couldn’t fail her, no matter how much he wanted to. She had brought the simulated Mako through the course without too much damage and all of her enemies were dead.

Garrus gripped the arms of his chair as they barreled toward a closed shield door. The thing didn’t
open until the last possible second and Garrus let out a sigh of relief. He turned to Shepard, watching her closely. He knew she was still having affects from her experience on Noveria, but would never admit it.

“How are your biotics doing?” Garrus asked quietly, hoping that Wrex didn’t overhear.
Wrex leaned forward when he heard the question. He looked worriedly at Shepard, hoping her answer was going to be ‘My biotics are fine. There is no need to worry’. But that wasn’t what came.
“Garrus, if you’re the praying sort, then pray there are enemies,” she replied, grinning maliciously at him.

“Damn!” Wrex said with feeling.
“I agree,” Garrus groaned, but for a different reason. He had the perfect reason to help her and he couldn’t. Wrex was in the Mako and they had Geth surrounding them.
Shepard smirked and then sighed as she noticed it was the end of the line for the vehicle. “Looks like it’s on foot from here on out,” she grumbled and then looked directly at the two men.
Garrus’ and Wrex’s body went on alert when they saw the look in her eyes. “Be warned. I’ll be using more biotics than normal, so be careful,” she told them, as she let her biotics flow over her. She sighed in relief and pleasure.

Garrus and Wrex jumped out the Mako, taking cover right away. Shepard jumped out, walking toward the door, straight into the firefight. Garrus’ heart was lodged in his throat as he watched her. He ran forward, trying to stop her, but it was too late. She was already through the doors.
Wrex moved quickly, catching up with Garrus and shaking his head at Shepard. He didn’t know what she was up to, but it seemed to him that she had a death wish. He stopped when he walked through the partially opened doors. Garrus stood there as Shepard glowed brightly, a grin on her face. Geth lay dead all around her. Wrex raised a brow ridge, not sure what to make of it. He had only seen her once when she was overloaded and that was when she lost control. Every other time she had a tight leash on her biotics.
This wasn’t as scary as when she lost control, but it was still unnerving. “Garrus, what do we do?” Wrex asked.

“Contact Alenko and ask him. I’ve never seen her like this,” Garrus answered worriedly.
Wrex shrugged his shoulders and contacted the Normandy. He and Garrus followed Shepard, but kept a lot of space between them. He had to place his hand on Garrus’ shoulder so the turian wouldn’t go to her side.
Kaidan raced to the cockpit when Joker called him. He didn’t know what was going on, but Joker said it was urgent. “What’s going on?” Kaidan asked, taking a seat beside him.

“What information do you need, Wrex?” Kaidan asked. It was very unusual that the krogan would contact him.

“Wrex needs information,” Joker stated worriedly. Kaidan took a headset and slid into the copilot’s seat.

“What information do you need, Wrex?” Kaidan asked. It was very unusual that the krogan would contact him.
Shepard’s glowing blue. Before leaving the Mako, she said she was overloaded. Suggestions that won’t get us killed would be nice,” Wrex sneered. He really didn’t want to talk to this human, but he was the only one who knew Shepard’s biotics.

“Cover her, and let her use them as much as possible. Don’t interfere when she is using them and I would suggest that if you have to stop her, have Garrus be the one to touch her. Make sure she doesn’t lose herself,” Kaidan answered.

“What do you mean lose herself, human?” Wrex asked, rolling his eyes.

“Fist,” was all Kaidan said. Wrex felt a shudder course through his body. He didn’t want a repeat of that particular incident. “I’ll stay to walk the both of you through it if something happens,” Kaidan told him. He took off the headset for a moment after Wrex broke communications. He really wished he was there now. Especially with what was happening. He trusted Garrus to do what was necessary, but he wasn’t so sure about Wrex.

“What’s happening?” Joker asked. He was starting to feel extremely uneasy.
Shepard is burning off some of her biotics so she doesn’t lose control,” Kaidan answered him.

“Well, at least we won’t have to worry about her blowing up the ship,” Joker grinned. Kaidan glared
at him for a moment and then chuckled. Joker narrowed his eyes, not sure about that chuckle. He
suddenly felt like he was missing something.
“I wouldn’t worry about the ship. Shepard is only so powerful. But the people… she doesn’t have to
overridden to be a danger,” Kaidan smirked as he saw Joker’s eyes widen.
Kaidan watched as Joker brought up Shepard’s file. “Haven’t you read her file yet?” he asked.
“No, I didn’t bother. She’s treated me right and most of what she’s done is common knowledge,” he
shrugged, turning his attention back to her file.
“You’ve been taking orders from a Commander you know nothing about except from stories of her
past. Joker, you should have read her personnel file when we first started this mission,” Kaidan said,
shaking his head at the stupidity of the pilot. Though he shouldn’t have been surprised; Shepard had
earned Joker’s trust.
~oooooooo~
Shepard and her team jumped down into a crevice, looking for a way into the ExoGeni facility. The
Geth had placed a shield of some type that was blocking their way in, so this was now their only
option. Garrus stayed near Shepard, a worried look in his eyes, but so far she was doing fine. She
was still in control and able to understand them. They took out a pack of varren, and Shepard swung
around, pointing her gun at the frightened woman who was pointing a gun in their direction. The girl
fired a shot at them accidentally; Garrus could see it, and he hoped that Shepard realized the same.
“Drop the gun before another shot is accidently fired,” Shepard ordered coldly, her pistol never
leaving its mark.
“I’m sorry, I thought you were more of those machines,” the woman pleaded when the soldier before
her didn’t lower her weapon. She watched her cautiously as she glowed with dark matter.
“Who are you?” Shepard asked coldly, and the woman shivered.
“Lizbeth. I work here at ExoGeni as a researcher. Have you come across any other survivors?” she
asked hesitantly.
“We came across some radio chatter, and there are more survivors at Zhu’s Hope,” Shepard
answered.
Garrus stood back with Wrex as the two women talked. He decided not to get involved when he was
sure that Shepard wasn’t going to kill her. He knew Shepard would never be able to live with herself
if she killed an innocent. “What did Alenko have to say?” Garrus asked.
“He said to leave her be, and allow her to use her biotics as much as possible. Just make sure that she
doesn’t lose herself,” Wrex replied and shrugged; just the thought of her losing herself made him
uneasy. “He also said you should be the only one to touch her. Though, if you don’t want to, I could
always do it for you,” he grinned as Garrus gave a warning growl, his eyes flashing dangerously.
“Don’t worry, I’ll make sure she enjoys it,” he taunted, chuckling when Garrus’ growls grew louder.
This time there was no territorial scent. Wrex could see the internal struggle as he fought his instincts.
Shepard watched the girl run off and thumbed the keycard that was now in her hand. She hoped that
this card would work and the woman wasn’t bullshitting her. She turned to Wrex and Garrus,
preparing to give them orders to head out. She stopped when she saw Garrus’ hands clenched into
fists, and his fringe engorged, turning slightly blue. She could hear his enraged growls from her
position. “What the fuck is going on?” Shepard demanded.
Both men swung around to face her; Wrex looked sheepish and mildly fearful. Garrus looked angry
as he snarled at Wrex. “Garrus, what happened?” she asked calmly as she walked over to him.
“Nothing I can’t handle,” he stated and his voice held a threat in it when he looked at Wrex. He
stared at the krogan coldly, making sure he saw the warning clear in his eyes.
Wrex saw this and laughed out loud. “You got squads, Turian. You’ll do,” Wrex grinned. Shepard
narrowed her eyes at the both of them and shook her head.
“Is it possible for the two of you to continue with the mission without baiting each other?” she asked
mildly.
Wrex glanced at Shepard and saw she was more annoyed than angry. He saw that Garrus had
calmed down, as well, and decided to push his luck. “No,” he grinned.
“Figures,” Shepard muttered as she turned away. “Wrex, you have the lead. Garrus, cover our
backs,” she ordered. She knew they wouldn’t disobey an order, but she allowed them a lot of leeway for their own amusement.

~oooooooo~

Shepard and her crew drove back to Zhu’s Hope, Joker’s warning still playing in her mind. The settlers were being controlled by a plant-like lifeform and they had begun attacking the Normandy. She was happy that they had been another method of disabling the humans, other than using lethal force. They now had grenades that would knock them out so they could complete their mission.

Shepard opened a channel to the Normandy. “Joker, have Kaidan suit up. Once we have the refugees knocked out, he is to join us,” she ordered.

“Understood, Commander,” Kaidan stated.

“Good, because I’ve been trying to lose this overload I have and it’s not working. So I really hope you have some damn ideas,” she muttered.

“How bad?” he asked.

“My skin feels like its burning when I hold my biotics in check. When I use them, any sound around me is like white noise,” she answered quietly.

“Shepard, what happened when you lost control on Noveria?” he asked urgently.

“I’m not talking about it!” she snapped coldly, cutting communications.

Kaidan sat there for a moment, swearing profusely. With an angry stride he stormed down to the Cargo Bay to gather his equipment. He didn’t bother talking to Ashley or saying anything to Tali when he saw her head to the elevator. He was about to leave, but Ashley stopped him.

“Who pissed you off?” she asked with a raised brow. This was the first time she had seen him like this.

“If you say so, LT,” she said and looked at him doubtfully.

“If Shepard wants you to know, she’ll tell you,” Kaidan snapped.

“You already know that Shepard won’t talk to me. Once she found out I can’t stand having the aliens aboard, she stopped taking me on missions or talking to me,” she snapped coldly.

“Do you blame her? You’ve made your hatred well known. You know Shepard is friends with both the aliens and the humans aboard. So you’re unwillingness to open your mind is why she doesn’t trust you,” Kaidan sighed, wondering how he had even got involved in this conversation.

He didn’t bother continuing as he walked into the elevator.

~oooooooo~

The last refugee fell to the ground unconscious; Shepard let relief flow through her that she hadn’t had to kill anyone. They’d lost a few settlers, but not many. She rubbed her eyes for a moment, trying to stop the burning. She had held her biotics in check so she didn’t accidently harm these innocent people.

She and Wrex covered Garrus as he worked the controls for the lift. Their guns swung over toward a sound at the far end of the camp. Shepard nodded to Wrex, signally for him to check it out. Shepard let her biotics flare to life when she was alone. She could shoot, but she wasn’t good enough to hold off a lot of people on her own. With her biotics she could, for a certain amount of time, but with the way her biotics were currently behaving, it seemed like it was never going to tire her. The lack of control was starting to terrify her.

She grinned when she saw Wrex and Kaidan walk her way. “Man, Shepard, you shouldn’t be able to do that now,” Kaidan exclaimed.

“Just wait, human, that’s nothing. Wait until her eyes burn with blue fire,” Wrex muttered.

“Shepard?” Kaidan questioned.

“I told you once and I will not repeat myself. I am not talking about it!” she snapped coldly, glaring at Kaidan.

Shepard didn’t bother to order them to follow her. She took the lead down the stairs, keeping herself alert to anything unusual. Eventually they came to a large room and stopped cold, staring at the center of an open cavern. “Is that….” Garrus trailed off.

“Yeah, I think that is the Thorian. It has to be the thing that was indoctrinating the people of Zhu’s
hope,” Shepard muttered. She was about to give the order to kill it, but the plant spewed out an asari, of all things. They stood there stunned, not sure what was happening. Shepard spoke with her for a few moments before she attacked. Shepard had to fight for control since her crew members were often moving in front of her. She growled in frustration, taking out her gun. It looked like she would have to suffer for now.

~ooooooo~

Pressly moved over to Joker. “It looks like the Commander took care of those people,” he commented.

“Yeah, hopefully it stays that way,” Joker answered absently.

“So, I guess the Commander was right,” Pressly said.

Joker turned toward him. He knew there was something on his mind since he wasn’t leaving. He wasn’t going to ask, as he really didn’t want to talk. “Do you think she will regain control of her biotics?” Pressly finally asked.

Joker rolled his eyes. “I have no doubt that she will. She even had Alenko go and help her,” Joker answered. Pressly watched him for a moment before heading back to his station. Joker turned back to the panels, awaiting word from Shepard.

“Did I hear right? Shepard is having a problem with her biotics?” Dr. Chakwas asked as Joker jumped in his chair.

“Yeah, she been overloaded for the full mission,” Joker shrugged. He looked shocked when Dr. Chakwas put the headset on.

“Kaidan?” she called, waiting for the lieutenant to answer.

“Dr. Chakwas, this isn’t a good time,” he murmured as he watched Shepard lift another couple of husks over the side of the path they were on.

“I need you to scan Shepard’s implant. I think that might be the problem since she never came back in for a checkup,” Dr. Chakwas told him. Kaidan’s eyes widened; he didn’t want to do a reading right now. Anything they came up with would be inaccurate, considering how much energy she was using.

“Dr. Chakwas, I don’t think that would be a good idea. We’d only get false readings,” he told her and hoped it would pacify her.

“Alenko, I need that reading. If I am right, we need to go to the Citadel as soon as possible,” she stated coldly. Her eyes narrowed when she heard fighting, but no sounds of bullets. “What’s going on?” she asked.

“We’re standing here watching Shepard take out husks. So far she’s clearing the path,” Kaidan sighed, watching his Commander as she eyes blazed blue. Garrus was tending to his injured arm from a group of husks. That was what caused Shepard to lose it and the husks that had been surrounding Garrus were wiped out quickly. He wanted to get Garrus to calm her, but no one was allowed near him. He knew Shepard wasn’t in her right mind at the moment.

“Once it is safe, I’ll meet up with you at Zhu’s Hope,” Chakwas stated, breaking communications. Garrus glanced at Shepard; she reminded him of a mated female turian. He smirked as he watched her. She would allow nothing to come near him, which was very odd for her. He moved over to her when he saw the worry in Kaidan’s eyes. When the last husk fell to its death, he placed a hand on her shoulder. She turned sharply to him, her eyes blazing brightly. He didn’t know what to do to bring her back to normal, but he knew something was wrong. He had heard the communication between Kaidan and the doctor and that worried him even more.

He hoped they were almost done this mission. Surely, they only had one more tentacle to go before the Thorian would plummet to its death. Once that was done, they could get her to the Med Bay. Maybe they could help her there.

Garrus watched as the last tentacle fell, and he sighed in relief. Shepard was still out of it, though her biotics were temporarily under control. They made their way to the main level so they could exit the place, but it seemed as though that wasn’t going to happen. He was about to lead her away, but stopped when the asari they had been fighting walked toward them.

“Stay right there!” Garrus ordered coldly.
“I mean you no harm. You’ve freed me from the Thorian,” she said carefully, looking at them with hope in her eyes. Garrus groaned, wishing that Shepard was more coherent.

“Who are you?” Garrus growled.

“Why are we talking? We should just shoot her and leave,” Wrex snapped irritably.

“We are not killing anyone…yet,” Garrus said, glaring at the asari.

“My name is Shiala. I followed Saren; I was his way to talk with the Thorian. Saren left me under the control of the Thorian after I helped him receive the Cypher. Your friend appears to need that, as well. It will help her to understand what the beacon showed her. Human and turian minds are not able to process Prothean technology,” she explained.

“Will this help Shepard?” Garrus asked nervously. He wasn’t sure if what he was planning would be a good idea.

“It will help her understand what she saw,” she said.

“Then do it,” Garrus muttered, ignoring the glaring krogan. Garrus moved next to Shepard when the asari neared. He was ready to slit her throat if she did something wrong. She watched him warily as she lightly touch Shepard’s forehead.

Shepard was in a haze; her mind couldn’t focus. Her power burned through her and her head throbbed. She’d never felt this way before. She thought that the overload was bad, but this was much worse. She felt someone in her mind, unlocking something. Images she knew so well replayed before her, yet they still didn’t quite make sense.

Garrus caught her when she passed out. It brought back memories of when she was overloaded. He looked down at her in his arms and saw she was starting to relax. “I took away some of her overload,” the asari whispered. “So, what are you going to do with me? I want to make up for my mistakes and help the people here.”

“Go, but cross us again…” Garrus trailed off, leaving the threat unspoken. He could see in her eyes that she understood.

~oooooooo~

Shepard lay on her bed, Garrus watching over her. He had Pressly give the order to head for the Citadel. Scans had shown that her chip was damaged. Usually it wouldn’t have been a problem, but for Shepard it was creating havoc with her energy.

Wrex and Kaidan stopped in often, as did Liara and Tali. Garrus was lost. He didn’t know what to do to help her. In the silence of her room, he had discovered one important thing and it shocked him to his core.

He wasn’t sure what Shepard would think of his discovery, but he didn’t plan on hiding it from her. He lay on the bed, holding her closely; grinning gently and purring softly.
Chapter 16

Chakwas paced her medical lab in irritation. She had been informed that the Citadel’s lead surgical physician wouldn’t be able to operate on Shepard for at least a week. Shepard didn’t have that long; this could drive her insane or… The second possibility was one that she didn’t even want to think about. Her moments of lucidity were already waning. The doctor didn’t know what to do to speed up the process of getting Shepard on an operating table. She had used up all of her resources. Garrus paced Shepard’s room. Chakwas had informed him that they would have to wait a week to get Shepard into surgery. He looked over at Shepard, smirking as he saw she was finally resting peacefully. “Garrus, there is another way,” Kaidan commented, drawing the turian’s attention. He had come to check on Shepard. It seemed as though the Commander had everyone on the ship worried sick.

“What’s that?” Garrus asked quickly.

“We could contact the Turian Councilor. He’s taken a special interest in Shepard. Maybe he will be able to do something. I would suggest Udina, but Shepard would kill us if she found we went to him,” Kaidan grumbled.

“How do we contact him?” Garrus scowled. He didn’t think they were important enough to warrant an audience with him. Also, he wasn’t sure what game the Turian Councilor was playing. The thought that he had put the challenging scent on Shepard angered him, and now they were forced to turn to him for help.

“I’m sure Shepard has his extranet address; contact him that way. Tell him what’s going on,” Kaidan suggested, but Garrus could see the apprehension in his eyes. This wasn’t a small thing he was asking; talking with the Turian Councilor without clearance was extremely dangerous.

Garrus sighed and went to her personal computer. He stared at it for a moment before realizing that it was asking for a password. He didn’t feel comfortable hacking into her files, so he left it with a sigh as another idea came to him. He wasn’t sure if he could do it, but he needed to talk to Pallin. It would be uncomfortable, given that he now knew about Shepard’s relationship with the C-Sec administrator; but if anyone could help, it would be him.

Quickly using his omnitool, he wrote a note detailing everything that had transpired with Shepard. Now it was a waiting game; he only hoped Pallin would answer.

Shepard floated in silent darkness; her head was burning like it was on fire. She opened her eyes, hoping to find something cold to place on her face. It wasn’t a fever; it felt like someone had placed a red hot poker on the back of her head and was holding it there.

“How are you feeling?” Garrus asked when he noticed her eyes were open.

“Fine,” she answered automatically, and she could tell that he knew it was a lie.

“Garrus, your L3 implant isn’t working properly. We are at the Citadel trying to get someone to fix it,” Garrus explained, hoping she was coherent enough to understand.

“Ask Dr. Sharp. He knows my implant,” she whispered, her eyes shutting once more.

Garrus turned to Kaidan. “Do you know who she’s talking about?” he asked.

“Yeah, he is a leading doctor of biotics. Getting to see him is near impossible; but we should still check it out, since she’s a special case,” he said. Garrus’ expression showed his confusion, so Kaidan decided to explain more. “This will be her third replacement.” He smirked when Garrus’ mandibles went slack.

“Why so many?” he asked.

“You’ve seen her biotics. The first replacement was right after they gave her a second dose of eezo. The third was during a mission where she lost control,” Kaidan said quietly. He didn’t know the specifics, but what he did know made him feel pity for Shepard. He knew the fateful mission had affected her greatly.

~oooooooo~

The Turian Councilor sat behind his desk, overloaded with paperwork. It included a compensation
form from Udina. He wanted the human embassy to be reimbursed for funding a new Mako. He smiled, remembering when Shepard had come to him and he had denied her. He had no choice, but he told her that Udina would be forced to pay the bill. He remembered her grin and her comment when he explained it to her. ‘That will really piss him off,’ she had chuckled.

With a sigh, he forced himself to focus on the datapad in his hand. It was another report from the Council’s Spectres. He wasn’t in the mood for reports, financial spread sheets, and complaints. His temperament was poor and he wanted to head home.

He was about to push away from his desk and leave for the day, but stopped when his computer warned him of an incoming message. He read over it quickly, and his breath caught in his throat for just a moment. Without another thought, he left his office; heading somewhere far more important.

~oooooooo~

Garrus left Shepard for a short time to grab something to eat. He brought it back to her room, taking a seat on a chair by her bed. He couldn’t leave her side; when he did, he was too preoccupied with worry for her to focus properly.

“Garrus, you’re not going to believe this. You’ve got company coming your way,” Joker stated, astonishment in his voice.

“What?” Garrus asked, though he needn’t have bothered. The door to Shepard’s quarters opened and the Turian Councilor stepped inside.

“What happened?” the Councilor asked abruptly.

“A while back she lost control of her biotics during a battle and damaged her L3 biotic implant. No one knew it at the time, and we later discovered it the hard way. She needs the implant replaced or she may well go insane. We’ve tried contacting doctors and none of them have the time to do it now. Shepard wants us to contact a Dr. Sharp, but he has no openings for another month,” Garrus told him. “I had Pallin contact you to find out if you could pull some strings for her.” Garrus felt the words were being pulled from him. He hated to ask this turian for anything; but if it would benefit Shepard, he would do it.

The Turian Councilor watched him for moment, an idea slowly forming in his brain. He knew of a doctor that could help them immediately. Quickly he typed out a terse message to the professor, ordering him to report to the Normandy immediately.

Shepard heard voices around her; they were whispering near her bed. She heard Garrus’ voice, but though the other voice was vaguely familiar, she couldn’t quite place it. It wasn’t important; Garrus was here and that was all she cared about. She opened her eyes slowly. It took her a few minutes to make out the second person in her room. She caught their attention when she struggled to sit up, a moan of pain leaving her lips. “Shepard, you should be lying down!” Garrus hissed.

“I don’t have time to rest. Saren is still out there. I’ll rest when I’m six feet under,” she snapped, pushing to her feet. She didn’t want to admit how much of a struggle the movement was. She had to fight to stay standing, and her vision wavered. Slowly it cleared and she met the eyes of the Turian Councilor on her ship.

“Why are you on my ship? Finally came to see if I’m doing things properly?” she asked with an utterly failed attempt at a grin.

He watched her for a moment. He could see that she was struggling, but was impressed with her fortitude. Even though she should be in bed waiting for her surgery, her only thought was to stop Saren. He had to give her credit for that. “No, I’ve contacted a doctor that will be replacing your implant,” he told her.

Shepard was about to ask who, but her bedroom door opened once more. Kaidan, Dr. Chakwas and an unknown salarian walked in. She raised a brow when she saw the salarian. “Patient doesn’t look that bad,” he muttered and proceeded to run his own scans. His eyes widened when he looked at the readings. She shouldn’t be on her feet. In fact, she shouldn’t be conscious. “Patient should be in bed, not on her feet,” he reprimanded the people in the room, not caring that one of them was a Councilor. “Professor, she is not one to listen to reason,” Chakwas explained.

“Have an operating room reserved as your orders specified. Need to get patient there quickly,” he said, turning to Commander Shepard. He knew who she was as soon as he saw her. Everyone in the
medical field knew of her. Her biotics were the subject of much debate; now he would have a chance to see into her brain. This was one opportunity he wouldn’t pass up. At first he had been upset when he received the abrupt message from the Councilor, demanding he come to the Normandy. It was quickly followed by another, detailing the current problem. When he heard it was Shepard, his interest was piqued. Not many doctors would take a case like this one; but he was no ordinary doctor.

It was well documented that her biotics would flare out of control when a sedative was used on her. That would make the replacement of her L3 implant quite challenging. He always enjoyed a good challenge.

“Where is the medical facility located?” Shepard asked quietly. She was sitting on her bed once more; the dizziness had become too much.

“It’s on the Presidium,” the Turian Councilor answered.

“Shouldn’t walk there. Not a good idea. Should have transportation,” the doctor stated firmly.

“I am not going to be wheeled around like an invalid,” Shepard spat, groaning loudly as pain lanced through her head.

“Shouldn’t exert yourself. Not beneficial to your brain right now; may cause more damage,” the doctor muttered as he saw her anger rise another notch.

“I am not going to be carried off of my ship like a fucking invalid,” Shepard growled. She flinched when she felt the dark energy surrounded her.

“Will use force if necessary. It is imperative that the implant be replaced immediately,” the salarian stated coldly, his anger matching Shepard’s.

“You and what army, doctor?” she sneered coldly as her biotics rushed over her body. The people closest to her took a few quick steps back. The only person who stayed near her was Garrus. The professor’s eyes widened as her body began to glow and her biotics flared to life. He couldn’t take his eyes off of hers. They were blue fire as she glared murderously at him. He had second and third thoughts about forcing her off of her ship as an ‘invalid’, to use her terms.

“Meet me at the medical facility in a few minutes,” Mordin stated and waited for her answer. She stared at him blankly before her expression turned into one of concentration. Relief swept through him as he watched her bring her biotics under control.

The turian with the blue markings moved quickly, catching her as she fell to the ground. He swore as he glared at him. The doctor raised a brow ridge at the protective body language; this was more than a crew member protecting his commander. He filed that away for further study, when he had more time.

He glanced at the Turian Councilor, not sure why he was here. The only reason he could come up with was that the turian with the blue markings was in his employ. He knew it wasn’t because of Shepard; she was human and the Councilor hated humans.

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The hours passed slowly, and the ground crew paced the hall of the medical facility. The Turian Councilor sat in one of the available chairs, watching the door that Shepard had been taken through. The other turian, whom he vaguely remembered from the trial, was sitting nearby with his head in his hands.

“What happened on this last mission that showed she was having a problem?” he asked Garrus.

“She couldn’t regain control, no matter how much she used her biotics. Kaidan, our other skilled biotic, joined us on the mission to help Shepard; but there was nothing he could do. We found out through Dr. Chakwas that her implant was malfunctioning,” Garrus explained, standing at attention. He kept his eye focused on the wall in front of him, awaiting the Councilor’s response. The Turian Councilor sat there, quietly worried about Shepard. He would never admit it out loud, however. He fought with himself not to use his position to gain entry into the medical room. He would have loved to do nothing more, but it would be highly inappropriate.

He glanced at the other turian in the room and wondered what his relationship was to Shepard. He acted like a mated partner, but there had been no territorial scent on Shepard. Yet his normal scent lingered on her, so he knew they had been together.
Garrus glanced up when someone entered the room. Liara stood in the doorway, looking worried. “Has there been any word, Garrus?” she asked quietly, taking a seat next to him. She barely spared a glance at the other turian in the room. He made her nervous. She knew he was a powerful person just by the way he held himself.

“No, the operation could take a while. Chakwas is in there, helping the professor,” he told her tiredly.

Wrex walked in next, his eyes widening when he saw the Turian Councilor. He chuckled when Garrus’ eyes narrowed in warning. “It’s been four hours. How much longer can this take?” Wrex grumbled. He was getting impatient, waiting here with nothing to do.

“It will take as long as it takes, Krogan!” The Turian Councilor hissed. “Is there something more important than this?”

“Yeah, like putting a hole in your Turian Spectre’s head. Shepard would agree with me,” Wrex stated belligerently, not backing down from the angry look the Turian Councilor gave him. Wrex didn’t back down when the Turian Councilor rose to his feet, nor when he growled in warning. They stood facing each other, filling the room with low, rumbling growls. Liara stayed in her seat, not sure what to do. She looked at Garrus worriedly, hoping he would step in and intervene before they tore the place apart.

“What the hell is going on in here?” a female voice cried, cutting through the growls. All eyes swung to the door. Dr. Chakwas stood in the doorway, her arms crossed over her chest; her eyes flashing angrily.

“A difference of opinion,” The Turian Councilor stated coldly. He moved closer to Wrex, dropping his voice low. “We’ll finish this later.”

Wrex chuckled menacingly, “With pleasure, Turian.”

“Shepard will be awake shortly, Garrus. You can see her for a few minutes,” Chakwas told the distraught turian.

“No. I’ll be going first,” the Councilor stated coldly, glaring at the doctor. Chakwas sighed; she couldn’t tell one of the Council ‘no’ and he knew it. She looked at the Councilor, giving him a brief nod. She didn’t open her mouth to give permission. She was worried what she might have said, instead.

She led the Turian Councilor into the room. He stopped at the doorway, and his breath caught. Shepard looked so small and fragile in the bed. It was something he wouldn’t associate with the woman he knew. He moved to one of the chairs, and her eyes flicked open blearily. She moaned, holding her head as she struggled to sit up. “Garrus…” she called, squinting.

“No, it’s Valern,” he answered her quietly, masking the anger that rushed through him at hearing her call the other turian’s name.

She gave him a confused look before it dawned on him that she didn’t know his name, only his title. “The Turian Councilor,” he amended dryly.

Shepard raised a brow at hearing he was there. “Uh, don’t take this the wrong way, but what are you doing here?” she asked.

For a moment he was taken aback by the question, but smirked when he saw she wasn’t trying to be insulting. “Your crew members asked for my help in procuring a doctor for you,” he answered.

“So, how long do I have to stay in this place?” she asked tiredly.

“Ah good, patient is awake,” the salarian doctor stated when he turned from looking over his test results. He was shocked to see the Councilor in the room, instead of the one she had been calling in her sleep. He was shocked to see the Councilor in the room, instead of the one she had been calling in her sleep.

She pushed herself to a sitting position, her eyes clearing from the anesthetic. “So, what did you do inside of my brain?” she asked the doctor.

“Replaced old implant with new one. This implant stronger than others that you’ve had. Will be able to take your overloads, and natural biotic energy,” he answered brusquely. “Implant has already been tested by your own biotics,” he told her, chuckling lightly. He thought back to the operation; it had been more of a challenge than he anticipated. They had to be very careful, erecting shields every so often when her biotics flared out of control. It provided quite a bit of aid, though they still had to
leave the room a few times. He was relieved when they finished the operation and the danger had passed.

“So, when can I leave this place?” she asked.

“Shortly. Dr. Chakwas will be monitoring your progress aboard the Normandy,” he told her before leaving the room.

“Shortly had better be in a few minutes,” she grumbled, forgetting about her company for a moment. Her gaze snapped to Valern when she heard him chuckle.

“He knows the importance of your mission. I highly doubt that he will keep you here long,” he stated as he rose to his feet. “I’ll be in my office if you need anything.” He patted her on the shoulder as she had instructed him to do not so long ago. She smiled up at him, patting the hand that rested on her shoulder. If she had been looking at his face, instead of toward the door where the doctor entered once again, she would have seen the expression that crossed it.

The salarian doctor noticed the look and worried that there would be a fight in the medical facility between the two turians. “Councilor, you should leave. Her team members wish to see her,” he stated as Garrus entered the room and stood next to him.

Valern stared at Garrus, a growl rumbling from his chest as he walked toward the younger turian. Garrus straightened to his full height, not backing down from the challenge. Shepard watched the two of them, not sure exactly what was going on. The salarian doctor moved over to his patient, keeping a cautious eye on the two angry males. “Show of dominance. Both males fighting over same mate. Not going to end well, unless female steps in and chooses,” he told her pointedly.

Shepard rose on unsteady legs; it took a few minutes for them to stop shaking. Slowly, she made her way toward the turians. “What in the fucking hell is going on?” she asked coldly. Garrus stopped his growling and focused on her, his mate. She turned to Garrus, holding out her hand; her eyes never leaving Valern. She gave him a challenging look as Garrus neared, taking her hand. Garrus placed one clawed hand on her shoulder, idly tracing his bite mark.

Valern watched them for a moment and understood what Shepard was telling him. He closed his eyes, angered that he never had a chance; but also relieved that she had stepped in before he made a fool of himself. He glanced at Garrus and heard his purring. Shepard had a contented smile on her face as she looked up at Garrus. He knew they would have a difficult time if their relationship became known.

Shepard leaned into Garrus as he held her close. Their attention turned to Valern when he spoke. “Shepard, you don’t have an easy road ahead of you if you choose him as your mate. I won’t be able to step in to protect you. However, you have the Council’s permission if this is what you choose,” he told her quietly. With a quick glance at Garrus, he walked over to Shepard; holding out his hand to her.

Garrus thought about warning him away. His instincts were still in high gear as he watched the Turian Councilor. Shepard clasped his forearm and he returned the gesture, before leaving them alone in the room.

“Have to check patient. Please leave the room for a few minutes,” the professor ordered.

“No, he can stay, doc,” Shepard said with a smirk as she moved back to her bed. The salarian nodded as he took out his scanner. “You know, I never got your name,” she commented, giving the doctor a pointed look.

“Professor Mordin Solis,” he answered absently.

“So, how was it that the Turian Councilor was able to get you?” she asked him.

“Doing work for Council. Was about to leave on mission, but Turian Councilor ordered me here. Mission starts as soon as I am finished,” he answered.

“If I have a problem with this implant, how do I get in touch with you?” she asked irritably.

“You don’t; will be on mission. No problems will arise with implant. Made it myself, and know what it can do,” he stated. Shepard rolled her eyes and stopped interrupting him. She wanted to be back on her ship, chasing Saren.

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Valern sat behind his desk, his eyes closed. He couldn’t concentrate on anything right now. The
Salarian and Asari Councilors were giving him odd looks when he returned from Shepard’s surgery. He hid in his office, waiting for those two to barge in and find out what was going on. He didn’t have long to wait. He knew from the look on their faces that he didn’t look well. “Do you mind explaining to us what is going on?” the Asari Councilor asked. Valern knew he wouldn’t be able to hide it anymore; he needed to tell them. His concern was that he would be excused from the Council and they would find another turian to replace him.

He sighed and told them of his original plan, and the Salarian Councilor smirked. “Didn’t work, did it?” he commented.

“No, Shepard is different from other humans. I actually respect her,” he grumbled.

The Asari watched him, an amused expression on her face. She recognized his problem and knew they didn’t have to worry. It wasn’t something that was potentially harmful to the Council. Valern had feelings for a human, and that explained his odd behavior over the past few months. The Salarian Councilor hid his amusement as he walked out of the office. He always wondered how long it would take for a human to gain the turian’s respect. For the longest time, he didn’t think it would even be possible. He didn’t allow this one success to alter his opinion, however. He knew that Valern might still stand against humanity. He admired only one human, not the whole race.

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Shepard boarded her ship and was surprised with the full salute she received. She nodded toward her crew, thankful for their show of support. She made her way to her room with Garrus following close behind. As soon as the doors closed, he pulled her into his arms. He wasn’t looking for sexual intimacies; he wasn’t sure if she was up for that.

Garrus rested his head on top of hers, relief rushing through him that she was safe. His eyes still narrowed, however, when he thought of the Turian Councilor. “Relax. He made it known that he isn’t going to push the issue,” Shepard said mildly.

“How did you know that was what I was thinking?” he asked, shocked.

“You tensed and started growling. At the moment, that is the only thing that would cause that reaction,” she explained, gazing up at him.

Garrus led her over to the bed. She lay down without complaint; her body still healing from the surgery. It didn’t take her long to fall asleep. Garrus stood there, watching for a bit; a wide grin on his face. Shepard had accepted him. She hadn’t called him her mate, but she had accepted him in front of the Turian Councilor. He felt lighter than he had in a while. Eventually, he left her there so he could get some work done. Wrex was in the Mess Hall, waiting for him.

“How is she doing?” the krogan asked.

“She’s fine. She’s resting right now,” Garrus answered, giving him a challenging look; daring him to say anything inappropriate.

“I’m surprised she’s walking after that type of surgery. She shouldn’t be. It usually takes weeks to heal,” Wrex commented, grinning broadly. He always knew Shepard was tough, and this only proved his point.

“That salarian said it would only take her a couple of days before she is back to normal,” Garrus told him, giving him a quizzical look.

Chakwas left her office and heard the two talking. She knew she still had to talk to Garrus about Shepard. She moved nervously toward the duo. Wrex scared her; she never knew how he would react. She knew Shepard was laid up, so there was no one to protect her from Wrex’s anger.

“Her biotics are what is helping her heal faster. She’s going to need to eat four times a day, at the very least,” she told Garrus, trying her best to ignore Wrex.

Wrex grinned as he smelled the fear from the doctor. He wasn’t trying to scare this human, but it was amusing to know that he could, if he wanted to. Chakwas glanced at the krogan, waiting for him to do his intimidation act. “Don’t worry, doc. I don’t bite…much,” Wrex chuckled as the doctor flinched. “If I wanted you dead, you’d be dead,” he told her. It was supposed to be reassuring, but it appeared that not everyone took it that way.

“Wrex, didn’t we have this talk?” He flinched when he heard the coldness in Shepard’s voice. “Don’t worry, I won’t harm the humans. Though you can’t blame me for enjoying their reactions,”
he groused.  
“As long as that’s all you’re doing,” she smirked, heading over to get some food.  
“Shouldn’t you be resting, Shepard?” Garrus asked, rolling his eyes.  
“Sure, if my stomach would quit grumbling,” she answered, chuckling when he flinched. It amused her that turians related the sound of a human’s stomach growling to a warning.  
“Should you even be walking around?” Garrus asked as he moved to stand beside her.  
“The headache I have says I should be in bed, but my stomach is saying it wants food now,” she shrugged. “So, stomach wins.”  
“Go lay down. I’ll bring you some food,” Garrus chuckled, shaking his head. He couldn’t believe it. She had just gotten out of the hospital, with Professor Solis ordering her to rest for a few days. Yet here she was, standing in the Mess Hall, getting food.  
Garrus met her in her room with a plate full of food. He found her sitting at her desk, sleeping with a datapad in one hand; her head resting on the other arm. He hadn’t been gone more than fifteen minutes and she was passed out. He shook his head in amusement.  
He placed her plate off to the side, gently picking her up. She moaned, flinching slightly. Her face turned into a grimace. Worry raced through him when he saw her in pain. “What is it, Shepard?” he asked, concerned about her condition.  
“Headache, bad one…” she groaned, curling into his arms. Garrus lifted her carefully and moved her to the bed. Keeping his gloves on, he ran his talons through her hair. She moaned, pressing further into his fingers. He applied more pressure and she started relaxing; her face reflecting the relief she felt as she drifted off to sleep.  
He remembered Chakwas’ warning that she may experience headaches, but there was nothing they could do for it; not until her brain was healed from the procedure. So he stayed with her until she was resting comfortably. With a final lingering look, he left her there and headed down to the Mako.
She sat in her office chair, reading the report that Valern sent her for the next mission. Virmire was the next major destination, but there were a few other missions that she wanted to finish first. The information she received said that Saren had a facility on the planet and they wanted Shepard to take it out as soon as possible. At the bottom of the datapad were strict orders to head directly to Virmire; which was the cause of her indecision. The more she thought about it, the more her brain ached. She was still healing from the surgery; so at the moment, everything aggravated the headaches. She now had more appreciation for Kaidan’s migraines. After seeing what he went through firsthand, she wasn’t going to push him about his biotics again.

“Another headache?” Garrus asked from behind her. She jumped with a yelp and then groaned as her head pounded.

“Yeah, this one is a good one,” she grumbled.

“Hasn’t Dr. Chakwas given you anything for the headaches yet?” he asked as he used his fingers to message her scalp. He kept his gloves on so he didn’t cut her with his claws. She moaned as the pressure eased slightly.

“No, she wants to wait another week. If the headaches don’t disappear by then…” she trailed off as he rubbed the base of her neck. “God, you’re good at that,” she moaned. Garrus grinned; he’d been helping her through her headaches since she left the hospital.

“You should be resting, not going over datapads. They probably don’t help your headaches,” Garrus scolded.

“If I don’t, who will?” she asked tiredly. Garrus knew she was right. He knew a headache wasn’t going to stop her from fulfilling her duty. He was concerned that if she continued at her current pace, she would end up in the hospital. Even worse, she may lose control. He didn’t like seeing her hurt; it brought his protective instincts to the surface.

“Where are we heading now?” he asked as he felt her relax. He knew then that the headache was almost gone.

“Well, we have a possible mission to aid some humans on the moon, but the Council has just ordered me to Virmire. Right now I’m debating on whether I should follow their order or not,” she shrugged and sighed irritably when she dislodged his hand accidently with the shrug.

“What happened on Luna?” he asked curiously. It wasn’t like her to be indecisive without extreme circumstances.

“It seems that there is a rogue AI running amok on the surface. And since we have a military base there, it could create a lot of problems for our soldiers,” she muttered, scowling down at the datapad in her hand.

“Then that is where we should be heading first. If you use Wrex, Ashley, Kaidan and myself on the mission, it will be quicker. You probably won’t have to use your biotics. That way you will have more time to rest before we get to Virmire,” he stated. What he said had logic, and he plotted and planned just as much as she did. His only problem was his natural impatience and his lack of confidence in his own leadership abilities. If he could play by the rules, he could go far in the turian military or C-Sec.

“Garrus, have you ever thought about going back to C-Sec?” she asked quietly.

“Since joining up with you and seeing how you operate, I’ve thought about it a few times. Though I don’t think I will be able to do half the things you do,” he smirked.

“Garrus, you could lead as well as I do if you had patience. That is your only problem,” she replied. She grinned deviously as a thought came to her.

“Shepard, I don’t like that smile,” he muttered, shifting nervously.

“I have a mission that I was going to do after we captured Saren, but I think we should do it now,” she stated, rising to her feet. Garrus watched as her ‘commander’ expression slipped into place. He
waited for her to speak; this wasn’t the time for jokes or banter.
“I’m making a course change. After this mission, we will be heading to Luna. You are to lead a
squad of two down onto the planet,” she ordered, passing him the datapad with the mission specifics
on it. “Read it over good before you decide who to take with you. Know your crew. You have three
day to prepare.” That said, she dismissed him. When the door closed behind him, she informed Joker
of the change in plans.
Garrus walked out of Shepard’s office in a daze. He hadn’t been expecting this; though secretly he
was pleased. He took a seat at one of the tables in the Mess Hall, going over the data. He wondered
how Shepard did it. There wasn’t that much information in this file.
Garrus went to the bridge to use one of the open terminals. He did a quick scan of the planet in
question. Unfortunately, it wasn’t much help; it didn’t give him any more information than he already
had. With a growl of frustration, he walked over to Joker.
“I hear Shepard gave you a mission,” Joker commented, grinning up at him.
“Yeah, though there isn’t much information in the file,” he muttered angrily.
“Well you can always ask Shepard for her input,” Joker said and smirked as Garrus scowled at him.
He turned to leave, but Joker stopped him. “Oh, by the way, Shepard’s estimates were off. We’ll be
there by morning,” he grinned as Garrus groaned.
~ooooooooo~
Shepard sat back in her office with a grin. Garrus, Wrex and Kaidan were planet side, completing
their objectives. Admiral Hackett wanted them to check out a distress beacon whose message had
been intercepted by the Alliance. She had Garrus turn on his mission camera so she could watch
what was going on. So far he was driving, more carefully than she ever would. It was almost
insulting to watch. The Mako was meant to be used, not babied as he was doing.
She frowned when she saw that he was slowing down the Mako. “Anything, Alenko?” he asked.
She raised a brow. “No enemies showing on scanners,” Kaidan answered.
“As Shepard would say, ‘something about all this doesn’t feel right’,” Garrus muttered. She sat up
straighter in her chair. Garrus’ gut intuition wasn’t as honed as hers, but he had good instincts. She
watched everything the camera was showing her carefully; trying to center in on any potential
problems.
“Kaidan, Wrex, fire up your cameras, too,” she ordered. Within moments their cameras were turned
on and she could see everything.
Garrus’ mandibles flared in surprise when he heard Shepard’s voice. He wondered why she wanted
them to fire up their cameras, though he was happy that she was actually watching this. Something
told him to tread carefully; that there was serious danger ahead. He tried to think like her. What
would she do if she was in charge?
He moved the Mako forward cautiously. It was probably a little too slow for Wrex and Shepard’s
liking, but they weren’t the ones who were stuck constantly fixing it. They approached the
abandoned beacon and nothing happened. He wondered if he had been wrong. Maybe there was
nothing threatening nearby. He gave the order to exit the Mako so they could take scans of the
distress beacon and the two nearby buildings.
The party halted as an ominous rumbling sounded near their location. He swung around to search the
area, but saw nothing. Wrex had his gun out as he, too searched the area. The gut feeling that had
been plaguing Garrus doubled as the rumbling continued. “Does anyone see anything?” he asked his
teammates.
“Nothing. There is nothing on radar, either,” Kaidan muttered. Fear was slithering its way down his
back. At the moment, he didn’t feel safe.
“Heard back to the Mako. I don’t want to be caught out in the open without protection,” Garrus
ordered. He made sure Wrex and Alenko entered first. He had just fired up the Mako when a
creature he had only seen in pictures reared up from the sand before them. It was a Thresher Maw.
He had never been up against one of these before, so now he was ‘playing it by ear’, as Shepard
would say.
Shepard’s breath caught when she saw the Thresher Maw. Now she was worried. She wished she
was there in charge instead of here at her desk, watching the fight take place. She watched as Garrus drove around while Wrex fired the gun at the monstrous being. Through Kaidan’s camera she watched the shields take on damage with every hit of acid that Garrus didn’t avoid. She couldn’t tear her eyes away from what she saw next. Garrus made an error in judgment; a very easy thing to do when the Maw disappeared below ground. The Thresher Maw popped up beneath the Mako, sending it flying. Her breath caught when she heard Wrex and Kaidan curse, but Garrus was silent. Her breath left her in a relieved sigh when the Mako landed right-side up. She sat on the edge of her seat, waiting to hear Garrus’ voice, but he was still silent. His camera was still and she worried that he might have been injured. She was about to give the order for an update, but stopped when she heard his voice.

“Where is it?” Garrus asked in a cold voice.

“Beneath ground again,” Kaidan answered.

Her heart raced in fear as the battle continued; her head pounding relentlessly. There was no way she was going to leave her seat, no matter how bad the pain. She grinned in relief when she heard Wrex’s triumphant roar. “Please tell me that means its dead?” Shepard muttered to the team in the Mako. She chuckled when Kaidan jumped at the sound of her voice.

“It’s dead. The Mako has taken a lot of damage, though,” Garrus told her. He was grinning wide as relief washed through him. He hadn’t thought they would survive the attack. Adrenaline was rushing through him still as they checked the bodies on the ground and made their way back to the Normandy. Even when they were onboard, adrenaline continued to course through him. He needed to see Shepard. That was his one goal as he left the Mako.

Wrex watched Garrus stalk away and grinned. He knew where the turian was going and wondered what Kaidan was going to say about it this time. He knew this time wouldn’t be to save the commander’s life.

Garrus walked quickly into Shepard’s office. She rose to her feet, giving him a predatory look as she moved toward him. That one look made his plates shift beneath his armor. She moved quickly, flaring her biotics to give her an edge as she shoved him roughly against the wall. Garrus growled low in his throat at her dominant display.

Garrus tried to switch their positions, but it was impossible when she used her biotics. He growled low in his throat as lust roared through him. This wasn’t going to be a gentle coupling of mates. This was going to be a reaffirming of life; gentleness had no place in this moment. Shepard rose onto her toes and clamped her teeth onto his neck, breaking through the tough skin until she tasted his blood. Garrus roared, and Shepard quickly found herself against the wall with her legs wrapped around Garrus’ waist. She felt his hand move in between them; she heard the rip, and the buckles being torn away. Before she could produce a coherent thought, she felt him enter her.

“Spirits, Shepard…” Garrus groaned, his mouth resting against her shoulder as he basked in the feel of her closing tightly around him. He shuddered as her nails bit into the sensitive spot beneath his fringe. She moaned low in her throat, her legs tightening around his waist. She shivered as she felt his hot breath against her hypersensitive skin. She could feel his teeth nipping her, but her clothes were in the way and he wasn’t able to bite her. She jumped when she heard more ripping of material and then felt his sharp teeth set against her skin.

“Mark me,” she purred into his neck. Garrus didn’t hesitate. He quit fighting his instincts and purred as he smelled his marking scent covering her, filling both her and the room. She was finally his. He roared and slammed into her; he couldn’t be gentle even if he tried. Her teeth pierced his skin deeper as he thrust into her. He gave an animalistic growl against her skin, his sharp teeth digging further into her shoulder. She cried out as she felt him reach his pleasure.

Garrus roared, his scent and release filling her. “Mine,” he growled against her skin. Shepard slumped against Garrus as he held her securely. His legs shook, but there was no way he was letting her go. He moved them both over to the bed, laying Shepard down and following quickly after her. He covered her body with his own, tasting every inch of skin that showed. In moments their clothes were discarded, and they lay wrapped in each other’s arms, tasting and exploring one
Shepard lay back on her bed, her eyes squeezed shut once again. Another headache pounded at her. Damn, she wished these headaches would disappear. She thought back to the mission they just finished. She had followed Garrus suggestion and took all four companions with her. He was right; the mission had gone a lot quicker and they returned to the Normandy without injuries. She cracked her eyes open when she heard the door to her room open. She was shocked to see Dr. Chakwas standing there. “Another headache?” she asked kindly. “Yeah, and they are starting to get very annoying,” Shepard bit out coldly. “I believe they are, but I know why you are having them,” she smirked. Shepard narrowed her eyes at her. “Why?” she asked cautiously. If she said that she had to go through another surgery, Shepard would not be happy. “We need to calibrate the frequency its working on,” she answered, producing a metal rod designed for that exact purpose. Shepard rolled her eyes; she should have figured that out. The implant hadn’t been set for her when it was placed into her brain. She should have remembered that her brain had to heal some before they could configure it for her.

She sat up, slowly turning her back to the doctor. She listened to the humming of the small device as it calibrated her implant. The headache slowly dissipated and then vanished altogether. “There, that should take care of your headaches. Now I have to finish the rest,” Chakwas murmured as she turned back to her work.

For the next hour the doctor remained in her room. She had Shepard use her biotics every once in a while, adjusting the chip’s setting until she was satisfied with the results. She had read over Professor Solis’ notes carefully and was shocked to learn that Shepard would be able to use her biotics without worry.

“So, are we done?” Shepard asked quietly when the humming stopped. “Yes, you shouldn’t have any more headaches,” Chakwas said, she moved Shepard’s shirt out of the way so she could see the wound that Garrus had left. It wasn’t as bad as it could have been. Garrus had been worried that he had damaged her and asked the doctor to check it out. She would have done it days ago, but the commander was an expert at evasion. Shepard watched her leave, a smile on her face. She went straight for her desk, now that she didn’t have a headache to distract her. She sighed in frustration at the answer to her message from the Turian Councilor. He was allowing her to finish a few other missions before going to Virmire. It seemed the reconnaissance team they had sent there had yet to land; so there was no rush at this time. She left her office and headed for Joker to let him know the route they needed to take. She was surprised to see Joker and Pressly chatting. They stopped as she approached, and Pressly looked uncomfortable at being caught away from his post.

“What’s up, Shepard?” Joker asked when she moved toward him. “We aren’t going to Virmire right away,” she told him. He raised a brow, unsure of this change. “The Turian Councilor just informed me. So, this is your new course heading,” she stated, passing him a datapad.

Joker looked it over. The new course didn’t take them far from Virmire, but it did give them the opportunity to complete some important missions. He plotted in the course and looked back at Shepard. “We’re staying near Virmire?” he asked.

“Yeah, just in case. I don’t want to take weeks to get there. I don’t think Valern will be giving us much warning,” she explained.

“Valern?” Joker asked, looking at her quizzically. He couldn’t remember anyone with that name. “She’s talking about the Turian Councilor,” Garrus stated coldly as he came up behind her.

“You’re calling him by his first name?” Joker asked, gaping at her.

“Oh well,” she shrugged, turning to leave the cockpit. Garrus followed right behind her as she entered her office. She rolled her eyes and took a seat on her chair. “What wrong, Garrus?” she asked, smirking at him.
He stared at her for a moment, not sure how to ask the question that was plaguing his thoughts. Now he was wondering if the mark that the Turian Councilor left on her was just a challenge, or if she had, in fact, been with him. He wasn’t sure he even wanted to know if Shepard had slept with him. “Garrus, just spit it out,” she grumbled as he continued pacing. He sighed, running his hand over his ridge. He knew he had no business asking this of her. She had never asked about any of his previous lovers. He watched as her head cocked off to the side and cringed. She had a knack of reading people. “Do you want to sit down and talk about this or continue pacing while you ask about my past experiences?” she asked with a knowing smile. Garrus stopped and gaped at her. He stood there flustered, not sure how to answer her. If he could blush like humans, he knew he would be bright red. He was lucky that turians weren’t made for that. Instead he nodded dully and took a seat with his arms crossed over his chest. She leaned back in her chair, taking up a relaxed pose; waiting for him to ask. “So, who are you worried about?” she asked quietly when the silence thickened to unbearable proportions. “Valem,” he answered quietly, feeling slightly ashamed that he was actually talking to her about this. Who she was with before shouldn’t matter, but it did. The Turian Councilor was a part of their lives in a way, and that made it all the more uncomfortable for him. Shepard chuckled. “You know, one these days I should be asking you these questions,” she muttered, shaking her head. “For your information, he’s a friend and nothing more. If he wants more, he can look elsewhere or use his hand,” she stated and smirked as he sputtered at her bluntness. “Sorry,” he muttered. He felt like a fool. He didn’t understand why this bothered him so much; knowing that she had been with others. Of course she wasn’t a virgin when they’d been together. Neither was he, not by a long shot. On turian ships, sex was a way to relieve stress. Yet on a human ship, fraternization wasn’t allowed. Maybe that was why he had a problem. He was startled out of his thoughts when he felt her climb on top of his lap. She flicked her tongue against his mandible, and pleasure shot through him. “You have nothing to worry about,” she told him softly. He glanced at the door, nervous that someone would walk in at any moment. “Everyone but you knocks,” she grinned as she undid the snaps on his armor. Garrus growled his pleasure, holding her secularly to him while his other hand went to the buckles of her uniform.
Chapter 18

Shepard sat behind her desk, writing up yet another report. They just finished two missions and were still waiting word to go to Virmire. It was starting to wear on her. She was almost tempted to land anyway, but pissing off the Council wasn’t one of her goals in life… yet.

“Shepard, you have an incoming message from the Council marked as urgent,” Joker stated, automatically patching it through to the conference room Shepard rose, rushing toward the room.

Garrus’ head snapped up when he saw her run past. He was just getting his mate her supper. It wasn’t like her to be in such a hurry, so he knew there was a problem.

She stood in front of the console and activated the view screen. She had expected to see all three Councilors, but only Valern was present. “You mean I could have taken this in my room?” Shepard muttered, shaking her head.

“You could have,” he answered, but raised a hand to silence any retorts. This mission was too important for banter. “The assassin I’ve been using to gather information for the past few months has disappeared,” he began. “His last location was onboard a ship heading for the Citadel, but I’ve lost communication with the ship and the operative. I need you to go to the location I am sending you and see what you can find. The assassin is your top priority. He is to be found, preferably alive. If he is dead, you are to search his body for any information. Report back to me as soon as you find out anything. I’m sending the coordinates to your helmsman. I sent an image and information on the assassin to your private extranet account.” Without another word, he vanished; ending the call.

“Did you hear that, Joker?” she asked.

“Yes ma’am,” he answered, already plotting a course.

“I want to be there like yesterday,” she told him.

“Understood, Shepard,” Joker answered.

“Have my ground crew meet me in the conference room,” she ordered before exiting the room. She moved quickly to her office, bringing up the information that Valern sent her on her private terminal.

Name: Krios, Thane.

Drell assassin.

Age: 37
Height: 6’ 1”
Weight: 190 pounds

Proficient in guns, hand-to-hand, biotics and stealth.

Shepard, while searching for him, be cautious of all shadows, ducts, and small openings. The drell doesn’t know if you are friend or foe and may attack. Use any means necessary to subdue him, short of termination. Contact me as soon as you have retrieved him, dead or alive. The information he carries is vital for your mission on Virmire.

Below the message was a picture of the drell assassin. She studied the picture, making sure she would be able to identify him on sight. Quickly she sent his specs and image to a datapad for the rest of the team.

Garrus and Wrex were standing by the door to the conference room. Kaidan, Ashley, and Liara were seated, and Tali was tapping information into her omnitool. They all turned to her when she walked in. She marched straight to the screen, hooking up the information that Valern sent her on her private terminal.

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Below the message was a picture of the drell assassin. She studied the picture, making sure she would be able to identify him on sight. Quickly she sent his specs and image to a datapad for the rest of the team.
information as each of them studied the picture.
“What is the chance of other drells being onboard the ship?” Ashley asked.
“Unknown, so make sure you know his face,” she replied.
“I’ve heard drells look a lot alike,” Liara commented.
“I have no idea. This is the first time I’ve seen a drell,” Shepard answered, shrugging.
“If he’s dead, what do we do?” Garrus asked.
“We bring his body back onboard. We need to search it for information before we leave. If it is not
on his person, we search the ship,” she stated.
Silence descended over the group and no more questions were asked. “Wrex, Garrus, Kaidan, you’re
with me. Ashley and Liara, you’re to guard the airlock. Nothing is to come in, except that drell. Tali,
I want you to run scans of the ship and see if you can find Krios’ location. Do your search from the
CIC deck. That way you can back up Ashley and Liara, if necessary. Ashley, you’re in charge of the
ship team,” Shepard stated with a warning look.
Ashley hesitated for a moment; not because of the cold look in her eyes or the warning, but because
she was trusting her to work with aliens. Something in her chest loosened. For a while she thought
Shepard would just drop her off somewhere and be done with her, but now she was getting a second
chance. She couldn’t screw this up.
“Joker, ETA?” Shepard asked the pilot.
“Ten minutes, Commander. Ship is in sight and looks abandoned. From the look of the exterior, it
was recently fired upon. The hull looks breached in several locations,” Joker reported.
“Gear up, everyone. Meet at the airlock asap,” she ordered, leaving the conference room.
~ooooooooooo~
Shepard led her squad onto the ship. Sparks flew from live wires that were hanging down from the
ceiling. They quickly located several human corpses, which they examined quickly. They moved
slowly, taking in everything they passed; trying to put the details together like a jigsaw puzzle in their
minds.
“Commander, whatever did this had fire power,” Garrus remarked.
“Is it a danger to the Normandy?” she asked.
“Yes. The Normandy doesn’t have the protection to handle this type of fire power,” Garrus muttered.
“Joker, I want scans to see if there are any ships in this area. Keep those scans going. I don’t want
anything sneaking up on us,” she commanded.
“Commander, I think I may have found a life sign, near the bridge. It’s faint, but there is a lot of
interference, so I can’t be certain,” Tali informed her.
“Can you tell whether it is human or drell?” Shepard asked. She didn’t want to race to the bridge to
find a human while their drell could be elsewhere, dying.
“Give me a moment,” Tali said quickly.
“Sorry, Commander, but it’s human,” the quarian said and sighed disappointedly.
“Shit! Keep scanning, Tali,” she ordered. “Ashley, anything to report?”
“No, Commander,” the chief answered automatically.
“Let’s move forward and hopefully we will find Krios. We need to find out what happened here.
This many people dead and for what?” Shepard muttered tiredly.
Above in a duct, ebony eyes watched the intruders. At first he thought they were here to kill him, but
now he wasn’t so sure. He followed them quietly, listening to what they were saying. He could tell
the leader was disgusted by what she saw.
He waited patiently. If he made himself known now and she was an enemy, he would be dead. They
were well trained and moved as one unit. He knew he wouldn’t survive a battle like that. So now he
waited for the perfect opportunity to make a move. “Garrus, take the right. Kaidan, the left, and
Wrex, head for the cockpit,” she ordered.
“Commander, I know you said survivors come second to finding Krios, but what do we do if we do
find any?” Garrus asked.
“Send them to the airlock. Ashley, be prepared for survivors. Do not allow them aboard until Krios
has been found. He is primary,” she ordered coldly.
“Understood, Commander, but can I have Doctor Chakwas attend them?” Ashley asked.
“Yes,” she said. Thane listened closely to her response. If she would have said “no”, he would have never trusted her. Right now, his main concern was why she was so adamant that he be found. He was worried that Saren may return again or that the woman below him was an agent of the turian. If that was so, there was no way he could allow himself to be found. He had to make sure that his information reached the Turian Councilor and Shepard. He only wished he knew what she looked like.

He looked down at the lone female and made up his mind. If she was an enemy, he would take her out and then continue with the rest of her team. If she was a friend, he would find out soon enough. He jumped down from the ducts. The woman turned quickly, ducking down into a crouch. Her hand glowed blue and he found himself pinned up against the bulkhead, unable to move. This hadn’t gone the way he planned. He watched her closely as she walked over to him.

“Ashley, we have Thane Krios. Allow all survivors onboard. Joker, as soon as all crew members have returned, I want us heading for the Citadel as fast as possible,” she ordered.
“Aye-aye, Shepard,” he said, and she heard the relief in his voice.

“Garrus, Wrex, report!” Shepard ordered.

“Clear, Shepard. I’ve found no survivors, but you should take a look at something,” Garrus said quietly.

“I’ll be there in a minute,” she told him. “Wrex?”

“Have four survivors on the bridge,” he told her.

“Ashley, Liara, head for the bridge and help Wrex with the survivors,” she ordered.

“Roger that, Commander,” Ashley stated brusquely.

“Tali, take guard watch at the airlock. Pressly, post two more guards at the airlock and two in the infirmary,” she commanded.

“The infirmary is covered, and I’m already placing two guards at the airlock,” Pressly answered.

“Kaidan, report,” she ordered.

“Kids, Shepard. They’re dead. Who would do this?” he asked quietly.

“A dead man walking, that’s who,” she answered softly, her voice firm in her promise that whoever did this would pay.

“I hear you, Shepard, I want on the team that goes after whoever could do this,” Kaidan said, his voice firming up.

“I second that,” Wrex’s voice came, with an angry growl.

“I’m with you on that hunt, Shepard,” Garrus said. “Always got your back,” he whispered absently, forgetting that she would hear him. He looked down at the picture in his hand and wondered what would happen when Shepard saw it. He looked at the girl on the floor, shaking his head slowly. Shepard made her way to Garrus’ side. She took her time, looking at each dead body; removing their dog tags. “Guys, please remove the dog tags from any casualties. We need to return them to their families,” she murmured quietly.

Thane walked beside her, barely making a sound. He could see that this pained her, but she still held strong. He bent down to a body she missed and passed her the tags he had seen her taking.

She came to a corridor and shook her head. “What is it?” Krios asked.

“Deja vu. I was raised on a ship similar to this when I was a child. Before my biotics showed themselves and the Alliance came and got me,” she told him quietly. She heard a few gasps and then some murmuring that she couldn’t make out through the comm. “Is everything alright?” she asked.

“Yes, ma’am. It appears that we have your parents on the CIC deck,” Ashley answered.

“What’s their condition?” she asked calmly, ignoring Thane as his brow ridge rose at the lack of emotion in her voice.

“They’ll live. Ashley and Liara are escorting the four survivors to the airlock, as ordered,” Wrex stated.

“Good. Wrex, I want you to check the lower decks. Take Kaidan with you. I want this ship searched from top to bottom,” she ordered.

“So, Krios, do you know who did this?” she asked as they turned another corner, coming up on
Garrus’ location.
“Saren and his ship. He knew I was onboard and he also knows I have information on him,” he answered quietly. Because of him all these people died. Somehow he had slipped up and the enemy knew where to find him.
“Another nail in his coffin,” Shepard growled.
Thane didn’t understand what she meant, but he left it alone. He wondered if the captain of the ship and her family were among the survivors. If they weren’t, he wasn’t sure what might happen.
Shepard walked into the room where Garrus stood. “So, what was so important?” she asked.
“Take a look,” he said softly, his hand resting on her shoulder.
“Garrus, you’re worrying me. What’s going on?” she asked nervously. She had never seen him act like this before. He nodded toward a body on the ground.
She walked into the small room and knelt down by the body….
Garrus turned toward the drell. “Krios?” he asked to make sure.
“Yes,” Thane replied and gave a half bow.
“Get to the Normandy. Tell Joker to get ready for emergency departure. Shepard is about to lose it,” Garrus told him firmly, turning back to his mate when he heard her enraged cry.
Both men hesitated when they heard the cry. Her biotics engulfed her like a blue flame. Pictures, clothes and everything else that was loose in the room swirled around her as if it was caught in a tornado. “Go! RUN!” Garrus yelled at the drell.
Thane took one more look at her, holding it in his memory before moving swiftly back to the airlock.
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Garrus, her gaze far softer than that which she offered her parents. “Find that drell and have him brought to my office in a few moments,” she ordered.

Garrus nodded. A small growl slipped out as he passed her parents. He knew Shepard’s history and how much their abandonment had hurt her. He smirked as they took a step away from him.

Garrus chuckled as they took a few more steps back when Wrex walked up to Shepard. “The quarian and asari had me make sure all survivors went to see Chakwas,” Wrex reported and scowled in disgust.

“I take it there were a few giving them a hard time?” she guessed with a grin.

“They are not now,” he grinned maliciously.

“Good. I’ll talk with you in a bit,” Shepard said pointedly.

Wrex nodded his head and scowled at the two humans. He could see that they were going to be a pain in the ass, as well.

Shepard led her parents to the Mess Hall. The rest of their crew were there seated at the tables nearby. There weren’t many left, and that confused her. Why didn’t they use the escape pods or put out a distress beacon, as was protocol?

“If you’ll excuse me, I have things to attend to,” Shepard said icily. She noticed all of her ground crew, including Ashley, seemed to be on high alert; watching her parents closely in case they pushed the issue.

What shocked her was that the drell was sitting with them, and he appeared to be just as alert as the rest of her crew. She couldn’t understand why, unless Garrus had informed them of her relationship with her parents.

Garrus took a seat next to the Normandy team. “Shepard wants to see you shortly, but I would give her a few minutes,” he told the drell. “And don’t bring up her parents while speaking to her.”

“What happened between Shepard and her parents?” Kaidan asked.

“They found out she had natural biotic abilities and haven’t spoken to her since they had the alliance collect her. She tried a few times to talk to them, but they turned her away,” Garrus shrugged. He wasn’t going to tell them everything, but at least now they understood the situation. He just wondered where Kaidan and Ashley would stand if Shepard’s mother decided to use her rank.

“I heard Jane Shepard had another daughter, but she always denied it. I served on her ship for a month. Never again,” Kaidan spat, a scowl clouding his features.

Krios left them and headed for Shepard’s office. He glanced at the two older humans that were Shepard’s parents and saw the hatred in their eyes when they looked at the aliens.

Shepard was sitting in front of her computer, and her posture was stiff. He watched as she turned toward him. Her eyes were distant and cold. “Krios, have a seat,” she ordered.

He took a seat near her and nearly jumped back up. A warning scent covered her skin, burning his eyes and nose. He knew who this scent belong to. “Are you sure your mate doesn’t mind you being alone with me?” he asked, watching her closely. He had used the word ‘mate’ intentionally.

“No, he doesn’t. Garrus knows I won’t betray him,” she told him absently as she read over the information that he had left on her desk when he first boarded the Normandy.

She gasped. “So this was why the ship was attacked? For this information?” she stated incredulously.

“Saren has a cloning facility, with Prothean technology in the main building? And you heard this from one of the workers in the plant?” she asked, her lips forming into a sneer.

“He was under the influence of an illegal product - truth serum,” he said smugly.

She chuckled. “Good one. Okay, so there is Prothean technology of some type in an unknown location in the building. So what? This isn’t enough to scare Saren. I’d already figured out he would have Prothean technology at his disposal. He must have thought you had something else, something bigger,” she murmured thoughtfully.

Krios watched her as she thought this through. What she said made sense. Saren must be hiding something really big on the planet and he thought Thane had obtained information about it. He couldn’t imagine what it could be.

“Joker, patch us through to the Turian Councilor,” she ordered as an idea came to her.

“Conference room or your office?” he asked.
“My office, unless it will be all of the council,” she muttered. Within seconds a holo-image of Valern appeared before her. “Shepard, good to see you,” Valern grinned.

“Good to see you, too, but I have two favors to ask of you,” she told him. “And they are?” he asked her curiously.

“Get ahold of Anderson and tell him that ship you had us check out was Alliance. Most of the crew members are dead. Those that did survive are onboard the Normandy right now. I want all of the dead found and given proper burial,” she requested.

“Why aren’t you contacting Anderson?” Valern asked, his curiosity piqued.

“Because the chances of Udina breathing down his neck are too high and I don’t want to have to put up with that ass. Also, you’re so good at sneering at humans and getting them to do what you want,” she chuckled.

“Compliments won’t get you anywhere, but I’ll do it anyway. It’s been a while since I’ve talked with your ambassador,” Valern chuckled. “What’s your next favor?”

“Have a ship meet the Normandy to retrieve the survivors,” she said and scowled. She really wanted her parents off of her ship.

“What are you hiding, Shepard?” he asked smoothly. He was beginning to read her easier with each contact.

“You know my file and personal history?” she asked and he nodded. “That ship was my parents’. They are onboard at the moment.”

“I’ll have the closest ship meet with you. Hopefully it’s Alliance, if not, they’ll…I…” he trailed off, shrugging. He looked at her thoughtfully for a moment and turned to his computer. She sat there waiting, and her focus turned to the drell.

“You’ll be giving him a full report shortly,” she warned him. She was about to say more, but the doors to her office opened and Garrus stepped in. He moved over to her, passing her a coffee and a plate of food.

“Your mother is trying to take command of the ship. You might want to step in,” Garrus warned her. “That will have to wait a bit….” she began, but was cut off by Valern.

“Have Captain Shepard escorted into Shepard’s office,” Valern ordered coldly. He watched as Garrus left. A pained look entered his eyes for a split second before the cold mask slipped back into place. “Consider this favor three,” he grinned.

She raised a brow, not sure what he planned. Her amused look turned into a scowl as Captain Shepard stormed into her office. “Captain Shepard,” Valern nodded curtly. They watched as she stopped and stood at attention. “Yes, Councilor,” she answered dutifully.

“This ship belongs to Spectre Shepard. Council law dictates that she now outranks you. It would be imprudent for any commanding officer to forget that,” Valern stated coldly, the threat clear in his words.

“Understood, Councilor,” she bit out coldly, before storming out of the room.

“So, how fast can you have a ship here?” Shepard asked, her eyes filled with hope.

“There is a turian ship two days from you. Meet the ship at these coordinates. They can take the survivors to the Citadel,” Valern said with a smirk as he watched relief wash over Shepard’s face. Thane watched the exchange between the two of them. He was shocked. From what he knew, the Turian Councilor didn’t take kindly to humans; yet he spoke to Shepard as if they were friends. If he wasn’t mistaken from the sadness he had seen in the Turian Councilor’s eyes, his feelings might even be more than that.

“Will the captain of that ship give me a hard time?” she asked pointedly.

“No, he won’t. You’ve met him a few times as it is,” he told her. “Captain Tanin.”

Her eyes widened, but she kept her mouth shut. Yes, she knew him. They were friends when they had both been stationed at the Citadel. Shepard was in biotic training and Tanin was a member of C-Sec. He didn’t stay with a C-Sec, as he was given his own ship, but she was still in training when he left. He was one of a few Turians that had befriended her back then.

“It will be good to see him again,” she grinned.
“Now, what about Thane Krios? What’s the word?” he asked.
“He’s living and sitting here more patiently than I ever could,” she smirked, nodding toward the drell. Thane moved up beside her, but he couldn’t remove the pained look as the territorial scent burned his eyes and nose. Quickly he gave his report, leaving out nothing. He even gave a detailed report of the attack on the ship.

Valern looked at Shepard thoughtfully. He knew if she found any information on the Reapers, the Council couldn’t take it without proof. He also knew that he was the only one on the Council that believed her story about the Reapers, but he had to play the political game. He made up his mind. The drell memory was an amazing thing and couldn’t be discredited easily. “Krios is to stay aboard your ship. He is to accompany you onto the planet. When you return to the Citadel after Virmire, bring Krios with you,” Valern ordered before cutting communications.

“Great, I get to take a rookie,” she muttered in disgust. Thane held his emotions in check, but he was not impressed with being called a rookie. Actually he was insulted, and anything that he said right now would only call on her ire. So he kept his opinions to himself.

“How much sleep have you had over the past cycle?” she asked, pinching the bridge of her nose.

“The last cycle, none,” he answered, unsure what she wanted.

“Get some rest. You’ll have four hours. I know it’s not enough, but at the moment it will have to do,” she said, turning her attention toward him. “You will be tested once you’ve had rest. You don’t pass; you don’t get to step foot off of this ship,” she told him harshly.

“The Turian Councilor’s orders were that I was to accompany you,” he reminded her.

She took a step closer to him, invading his personal space. She saw anger enter his eyes before they went empty. “My ship, my rules. You are an unknown. I will not have you putting my ground crew in danger on the whims of the Council!” she snapped coldly. “Either you prove yourself, or you stay onboard under guard!”

Thane watched her for a moment. Since he first saw her, she had impressed him. She had a commanding presence that had nothing to do with her rank. He was also impressed with the fact that she didn’t back down for anyone. Even though she had been walking through dead bodies a few hours before, and had discovered that it was her parents’ ship, she continued to lead and didn’t allow it to cloud her judgment. Now she stood toe to toe with him when he brought up the Council. What she said was true, but he was surprised to find that wasn’t concerned for the mission, but the wellbeing of her crew.

“As you wish,” he bowed formally out of respect before walking out of her office.

His eyes widened when he walked into the Mess Hall. The crew members of the other ship were scowling at the aliens. Her mother was dressing down the asari from Shepard’s ground crew; he believed her name was Liara. Garrus was growling low in his throat, but none of her ground crew reached for the weapons they had on them. They took the insults from the captain. It looked like each of them had been reprimanded by her.

Thane scowled and headed back into Shepard’s office. “Commander, you’re needed in the Mess Hall,” he stated urgently. Her eyes narrowed as she rose from her chair. He backed off a few steps, unsure what was about to happen. The coldness in her eyes made him leery.

He stood beside her as she walked into the Mess Hall. Quickly he moved back a few steps when her eyes began to glow. Her hands were clenched at her sides, burning with blue fire. “Enough!” she said and her voice echoed around the room. Everyone stopped dead.

Shepard watched as she parents swung toward her. She turned her attention to her crew and noticed they were on dinner break. However, what she was about to do shouldn’t be done in front of prying eyes. “Go back to your stations,” she ordered calmly, though there was nothing calm about her demeanor at the moment. Her ground crew stayed behind, ready in case there were problems. Garrus watched her proudly, as she issued the order. He smirked as her attention turned toward her parents. She raised a hand toward her mother; a blue glow enveloped the older woman as Tania pulled her closer. “Remember this well, Captain. My ship, my rules. If you treat another of my crew members that disrespectfully again, I will see you out the airlock,” she threatened coldly, her tone echoing the seriousness of her words. “For as long as you are on this ship, you will be under guard.
and those who are guarding you have my permission to use any means they deem fit if you step out of line.”

“Wrex, Kaidan, escort these two down to where we are holding the survivors. A turian ship will be meeting us in about two days,” she ordered.

“Make that one day, Shepard. Got word from the turian vessel and they are one day from the meeting place. So are we,” Joker cut in.

“If you can shave some time off that, please do,” Shepard muttered as she watched them escort her parents away. Parents - now that was a joke! They were more like genetic donors.

“Will do, Shepard,” Joker answered.

“Have it announced that the crew can resume their supper,” she ordered and walked back into her room. She smirked as she heard Garrus follow her. She should have known that he would be right behind her.

He walked up behind her, bringing his face to her shoulder and taking in his scent. “You can’t kill your parents, no matter how tempting it is,” he murmured against her shoulder.

“I never knew Valern had a sense of humor. He has a turian ship meeting up with us to collect the survivors,” she told him, grinning broadly.

Garrus chuckled. “The two older Shepards are going to love that,” he replied. She raised a brow in response. “Well, they aren’t really your parents. They left you and when you tried to make contact, they shunned you. So, I’m not calling them your parents, nor am I giving them the respect that title would bestow,” he glowered.

“Thanks,” she murmured as she nipped him on the neck.

“What do we do about the drell?” he asked, tilting his head off to the side.

“In four hours I’m going to be testing him. I want you to test his hand-to-hand,” she told him.

“Tania, you should be the one testing him. Use your biotics the same way you do when we spar,” Garrus muttered.

“Hmm, no. You’re doing it. If I do, I can’t promise control,” she bit out glaring at him. Garrus gave her a searching look and nodded his head.

~oooooooooo~

Shepard walked down to the garage where Krios would be tested. She was surprised to see all her ground crew standing or sitting around, waiting. She watched in amusement as money changed hands. She didn’t stop the betting or anything else they were planning. She trusted them not to do anything she wouldn’t like. “I want him tested fully,” she ordered Garrus crisply.

“What’s the limit?” Garrus asked, beginning to pull off his gloves.

“Gloves stay on. No broken bones or permanent damage,” she told him as she took a seat next to Wrex.

“So, Shepard, how much are you betting on Garrus?” Wrex asked.

“I have a hundred credits that says that Garrus kicks his ass,” she grinned.

“You’re on. I think green boy there is going to win this one,” Wrex chuckled as they shook, sealing the deal.

Shepard sat back in her chair, sipping on the coffee that Kaidan handed her from a thermos beside him. She smirked as she admired Garrus in his civilian clothes. They watched as the drell removed his leather coat and vest, leaving him in only pants and boots. Shepard raised a brow. “Well, well, what do you know? We just found the equivalent of a male asari.” she grinned, admiring the view. She had to admit, he was definite eye candy. But she preferred Turian physique over all. Claws and sharp teeth - oh yeah, she would take that any day.

“I have to admit you do have a point there,” Tali commented as she moved over to Shepard. Shepard raised a brow in surprise. Tali grinned. “I’m not blind, Shepard,” she said. They both chuckled as Wrex shook his head at them, grinning deviously. Kaidan rolled his eyes, keeping his opinion to himself.

“Are the both of you ready?” she asked in a bored voice.

“Yes, I am ready,” Krios answered politely as he bowed to her.

“Ready, Shepard,” Garrus grinned, taking up a fighting stance.
She watched as they circled each other. Thane was quick, his hits precise; each one going for the turian’s weak points. Garrus had reach, which made it harder for Thane, but he wasn’t as quick. Punches, kicks, jabs and jumps were part of the show. She was shocked watching Thane; he made it look like a dance. She could feel her anger rise as Garrus began getting hurt. She felt her hands starting to glow and growled as another hit landed on Garrus’ face, forcing him back.

She hadn’t even realized she had risen to her feet until Wrex sat her back down into her chair. She looked at him, shocked to see him holding her hand. Kaidan looked at her worriedly, and Ashley had already backed away from her. She hissed when Krios’ round house pushed Garrus onto his back. Her hands burned as he went in for the finishing move.

Wrex saw what was happening and knew he had to step in or she would kill the drell. “Drell, you won the match,” Wrex’s voice boomed out. He just hoped that hadn’t made it worse. Would Shepard be able to accept her mate’s loss? He hoped so; this ship wouldn’t be able to handle her biotics flaring out of control.

Thane backed off and glanced at the krogan. His eyes widened when he saw Shepard. Her hands were burning bright and rage filled her eyes. He blinked slowly, remembering that he just fought her mate and harmed him. He wondered if he was going to live through this.

Garrus glanced around, wondering why Wrex had called an end to the match. He had to admit that he couldn’t defeat Krios. He was an excellent fighter. His eyes landed on Shepard. He saw the fury in her eyes as she glared at the drell. He knew he had to step in before things went further. Garrus moved over to her, blocking her view of the drell; making sure he was the only thing that she could focus on.

“Well, I can honestly say I don’t want to fight him again. He’s good, Tania,” he said softly. She looked at him, startled that he used her first name in front of everyone else. She had told him he could call her that, but he hadn’t felt comfortable using her first name in front of others.

“He’s that good?” she asked as she got herself under control.

“Didn’t you see me get my ass handed to me just a few moments ago?” he joked. “So what did you want to test him on next?” he asked.

“Marksmanship,” she muttered.

“Well that’ll give you something to do. We’ll need a barrier to do that so we don’t hit the hull,” Garrus said thoughtfully.

Shepard closed her eyes, throwing her biotics around the room; creating a strong barrier. “You better hurry up. With my loss of control earlier, I am not sure how long I can hold this,” she muttered. At the moment there was no strain, but if it took more that fifteen minutes she would definitely be feeling it.

She watched as Garrus set up the markers. Krios assembled his weapon quickly. He fired six shots in rapid succession, and each found the center of the target. At this range, it wasn’t that much of a challenge; but the way he did it was impressive. He knew how to handle a gun.

Shepard released her biotics, allowing it to flow back within her. She sighed when she felt it filling her. Her eyes met Garrus’ for a moment, but that was all that was needed. He grinned, giving a nod before turning and facing Krios.

“No one. There is no need to. I can see how powerful you are and it’s not that impressive, no offense,” she stated. “The only other test is your stealth.”

“If you are doing a full testing, my biotics should be tested. Even an asari could make a mistake with reading a person’s level of biotics,” Thane stated calmly.

“Thane, do you really want to go up against me?” she asked tiredly. Thane blinked both sets of eye lids and nodded, letting his biotics flare over his hand.

Shepard shook her head in annoyance. She moved to the center of the room and allowed him to make the first move. He struck out at her, and she easily countered his maneuver. Her biotics gripped him, yanking him toward her brutally. “As I said, you’re not that powerful. I can tell by the color that radiates from your body because of your biotics,” she told him coldly. “Don’t question me again,” she growled, releasing him from her energy.
He stepped back, giving her a searching look. Beneath his cool exterior, she could sense his fear. She didn’t care; he wasn’t important enough to care about. Garrus moved over to her. “That was harsh. You didn’t need to do that,” he stated in a hard voice.

Her gaze whipped to him. She began to snap at him, but Garrus cut her off. “He didn’t deserve that!” he told her in a hard voice. She stopped him before they made a scene. She glanced around, realizing that the crew had all abandoned the garage.

“He is not a part of this team. He’s the Council’s hired hand,” she spat, irritation creeping into her voice.

“That ‘hired hand’ has put his life in danger multiple times, so you would have the information that you need to stop Saren. He didn’t have to do those missions. He could have turned Valern down at any time. He was willing to help as soon as he was told what was at stake. He did these missions so you would have your information,” Garrus snapped heatedly.

“Fuck, I didn’t know. I thought it was all about the money or that Valern forced him to help,” she groaned, feeling foolish. Garrus smirked as she paced the area. She looked at him, a defeated expression on her face. “Go get Krios. I have to talk to him.”

“Thanks,” she sighed, groaning as she heard Garrus chuckling at her. She glared at his back, shocked that he stood up to her like that. She was actually quite pleased with the development. Too many people had backed down to her, including many of her former lovers. He was the first partner that put her in her place without being scared.

Thane and Garrus walked into the garage area. Thane looked at her cautiously as Garrus stayed back, allowing her privacy. “It looks like I owe you an apology,” she sighed, running a hand through her hair. “I assumed that you were just following orders; doing this because Valern was paying you a lot of money.”

He bowed deeply, accepting the apology. “Did you wish to continue with the testing?” he asked, giving her a small smile as she shifted uncomfortably.

“Yes, we have to,” she said and gave him a relieved smile.

“How would you test my stealth?” he asked curiously.

“You know where my office is. You are to make your way from here to there without any other crew members spotting you. They will all be expecting you, so be prepared,” Shepard told him. He gave her a thoughtful look before shrugging nonchalantly. She watched him for a moment, not sure what to make of him.

She and Garrus walked back to her office, waiting on word from the crew. She put out a ship wide alert for all crew to keep an eye out for the drell. No one was to harm him or stop him; they were simply to notify her if they saw him or any unconscious bodies. She made sure it well known that this was a test for the drell, and that he had to use stealth to make it to her office.

She went to move to her office chair, but Garrus stopped her; pulling her to him and nuzzling her neck. His teeth gently nipped at her skin. “We should wait until Thane’s test is done,” she murmured.

“He’s going to be a bit yet,” Garrus mumbled in her skin. One hand travelled along her taut body, while the other slipped under her shirt, gently caressing her skin. Shepard purred against his shoulder as her own hands wondered over his body. She left the truly sensitive spots alone, until he nipped her neck; his tongue soothing her burning skin.

“Garrus, we should wait,” she moaned, her body betraying her as she clutched at him.

“Then he better hurry up, because I’m not waiting much longer,” he muttered, flicking his talon along the peak of her breast. She groaned, clutching at the sensitive skin beneath his fringe. She felt a shudder rush through him and sighed softly.

Thane knelt in the duct that was above the Commander’s room. He was unsure what he should do, considering the scene that was playing out below him. He didn’t want to interrupt them, but she had been adamant about his testing. He hated giving away his position, but he thought it would be prudent before things went further.

Shepard looked over Garrus’ shoulder when she heard someone in the ducts. She knew Thane had done it on purpose. “We’ll have to continue this in a moment. Krios is here,” she announced as the drell jumped down gracefully. A part of her wished she could have him as part of her team for the
rest of the battle against Saren. If he was good as his testing showed, he would be an asset to her crew.
“Good, no one notified me that you were moving around. How many crew members are unconscious?” she asked.
“None, there was no need. They were expecting me to be using the shadows, not the ducts,” he answered.
“Fine, get some rest. You’ll find cots down in the garage that you can use. If there isn’t a spare one, ask Wrex which one is Garrus’. You can use that one tonight,” she told him.
“Will he give me the answer I am looking for?” he asked uncertainly.
“Wrex will, if you tell him where Garrus is,” she shrugged. She smirked as he walked out of the room. Garrus barely waited until the doors were closed before he had her pinned against the wall.
Chapter 19

Shepard sat in her chair, trying to calm her nerves before touching down on Virmire. This was an important mission. The chances were good that she would finally encounter Saren. If that was truly the case, she knew she may soon lose her alien crew. Tali would go back to her people, and Liara would return to her excavations. There was no telling what trouble Wrex would get into once he was no longer with her. Finally, there was Garrus, her mate. She smiled softly as she thought of him. She hoped that he stayed aboard, but she knew he had to go back to C-Sec.

The soft smile disappeared as she thought of last few nights. She was tortured by the incident on her parents’ ship. Having her parents on her ship haunted her sleep. She couldn’t stop blaming herself for not arriving in time to stop the deaths. Parents she hadn’t spoken to since she was a child haunted her now. She had woken up with a silent scream, her body shaking. Garrus had automatically been there, calming her. He ran his hand soothingly along her back until her shaking subsided. She could see the question in his eyes, but she never answered it. She hadn’t missed the glimpse of hurt and disappointment that flashed in his eyes before he hid the emotions.

She glanced over her shoulder when her doors opened. Garrus stood there, smirking at her. “So in a few hours we’ll have Saren,” he commented.

“Yeah, we will,” she murmured softly, showing her uncertainty. She didn’t have to wear her commander’s mask in front of Garrus. She could be herself and he wouldn’t look down at her for her doubt. When it was just the two of them, he was the commander. He became what she needed.

“What’s bothering you?” he asked, taking a seat on the chair opposite her.

“What if he’s not there, even though everyone is expecting him to be? What if he is there and gets away?” she muttered.

“What’s bothering you?” he asked, taking a seat on the chair opposite her.

“What if he’s not there, even though everyone is expecting him to be? What if he is there and gets away?” she muttered.

“Then we go after him. You know that. But what’s really bothering you, Tania?” he asked with knowing eyes.

She sighed; he knew her too well. “I should be mourning my sister, but how can I?” she asked quietly. “How can I mourn when I never knew her?”

Garrus quietly listened to her question. He knew she wasn’t finished yet. She had told him how she had been taken at a young age by the Alliance and trained to be a powerful biotic. He knew that she had been angry at her parents for many years. He also knew that she hadn’t known the deceased sister she found on the vessel. She only knew of her through a holo picture that she had shown him one night.

“Garrus, do you know why I lost control?” she asked him, anger and frustration flashing in her eyes.

“I think I have an idea, but I want to hear you admit to it. You need to, Tania, especially since you’ve been having nightmares since your parents arrived on board,” Garrus told her firmly.

“Saren was so close and yet he slipped away again. This time he took lives. He almost took my parents. He’s making it personal now. Actually, he made it personal when he killed Nihlus, but he didn’t know that. Now I would put money on the fact that he attacked my parents because of who they are; not because of Krios. What pisses me off the most is that he was only four hours away, Garrus. We could have had him,” she said heatedly. “But instead, we find ourselves in a ship with the deceased bodies of innocent men, women and children. It was that unspoken challenge, coupled with seeing a sister that I wanted to meet cut down at a young age, which set me off,” she said and grimaced, not meeting his eyes; afraid to see the disappointment in them.

“Do you feel better after finally admitting to it?” Garrus asked with a smirk. She responded with a mock glare of her own.

“Yeah, I do. How did you know that was the problem?” she asked hesitantly.

“After everything you’ve shared with me over these past eleven months, how could I not come to that conclusion, knowing you?” he asked pointedly as he rose to his feet. He cupped her face in his hand, his claws idly tracing her skin. He leaned down, flicking his tongue across her mouth and backing away before she could react. He nuzzled his cheek against hers, tasting his own scent on her
skin, and he purred deeply in pleasure. She tilted her head off to the side, giving him access to her neck. Her eyes latched onto the scar of the bite mark on the side of his neck. She leaned closer, tasting the old bite she had left on him as he had tasted hers. She wasn’t sure what it meant, but it was important to him and that was all that mattered to her. She noticed that her bite mark was the only one that was on his neck. There were no other scars from other turians.

Garrus growled his pleasure, and stopped tasting his mark; tilting his head to allow her greater access to him. His body wanted her to mark him again, to reopen the wound and taste him. Garrus cupped the back of her head, not wanting her to back away. The rational part of his mind warned him that she probably didn’t understand what he wanted her to do and what it would mean to him.

Tania felt him hold her head against his neck. She could feel the tension in his body as if he was waiting for something. She wasn’t sure what he desired, but she couldn’t get enough of the taste of his skin. It tasted sweet and bitter at the same time. She knew she could easily become addicted to him. She noticed that his skin was softening, which was odd for a turian. It wasn’t soft like her skin nor was it the usual leathery texture. She breathed in the sweet scent, and she could feel him vibrating in anticipation. “Please, Tania….” he moaned, holding her close.

She licked him once more, a light film covering the now softened leathery skin. She flicked her tongue out, tasting the sweet residue. “Spirits, Tania, please bite me,” Garrus moaned in frustration. Tania laid her teeth on his neck, pleased to hear a rumbling growl from him. Wanting to tease him, she slowly applied more pressure. She moaned as she tasted his blood on her tongue. He roared his pleasure as he felt her small teeth break through his skin. He knew he should have explained what this meant, but he couldn’t even speak at the moment. He wanted his mate to mark him, to claim him as her own. This was the turian version of a marriage. He made sure that his territorial scent flooded the room, covering her as her teeth sank deep within his neck.

~oooooooo~

The team stayed down by the Mako, awaiting word from Joker. They were finally ready for the mission. She had put it off as long as possible; now they were about to be dropped onto Virmire. With every fiber of her being, Shepard was hoping that Saren was on the planet. She had a score to settle with him, and she planned on taking her payment in blood. She would finally end this hunt, getting revenge for Nihlus and her sister.

Garrus glanced over at his mate as he checked his gun. She still had a smile on her face. They had been in her office, using the details they had about Virmire to finalize the plans for the mission when Valern had contacted her; giving her orders to land on the planet. He remembered her excitement in the room. Her reaction was one that only he was allowed to see. One in which she didn’t need to have her ‘commander’s’ mask in place. But as soon as she left the room, she was Commander Shepard; feared by all. She shouted out orders, expecting them to be heeded. They were, and the ship became a place of activity as guns were modified, and armor was double checked. The ground squad was determined, and the mission layout was reviewed until the team knew it by heart. Word had reached the crew that Saren might be on planet, and both anticipation and morale were at an all-time high.

Tania glanced at Garrus, watching him for a moment. He had been her support over the last few days. He had stayed up late into the night with her as they went over this mission time and again. He showed her some flaws in her strategies. Working together, they had come up with a sound plan. They knew it wasn’t a set plan; but it was the best they could come up with, given their limited knowledge of the overall terrain. They included Krios in their meetings several times, asking him to tell them everything he remembered; which was quite a lot. Thane seemed to have a photographic memory and that couldn’t have pleased Shepard more.

She watched as he meticulously looked over his gun, checking every component and the mods she had specified for this mission. Wrex was sitting on one of the chairs in the Mako with the door open. She watched as he checked his own equipment, as well as the targeting systems for the Mako’s cannon. Krios, their tag along, was sitting on a nearby crate; looking over his guns. Shepard had insisted that he be given the same mods for his weapons that her ground team had. After he balked at the suggestion once, she put her foot down. Now the drell had the needed mods. She knew she
didn’t really have to worry about him. He would be following, but she wouldn’t be giving him orders. He would be left on his own, to complete his mission as he saw fit. It didn’t matter that he already proven himself; he hadn’t been trained to be in a group, so she couldn’t count on him.

Joker’s voice pulled her from her reverie. She noticed everyone nearby stop what they were doing and listen. “Shepard, there a problem,” he announced. “I have to drop you further from our intended mark than we planned. The turret cannons are hindering us from getting any closer. You need take them out so the Normandy can pick you up.” She glanced around to view the ground party’s reactions. None of them seemed concerned about the change in plan, which was good. That told her that the crew trusted her.

“Will do, Joker,” Shepard answered. “Alright, guys, let’s move,” she ordered, motioning them to enter the Mako.

She climbed in behind Garrus, scowling as he moved into the driver’s seat. “Forget it, Garrus, you are not driving,” she said jovially. He looked at her and groaned, moving out of her way so she could take over the controls.

“You shouldn’t be allowed to drive the Mako, Shepard,” Garrus muttered. She chuckled. This was a bone of contention with them. He thought she was a lousy driver and she thought he was being dramatic.

“I second that,” Wrex grumbled from the back. She raised a brow, shocked at hearing Wrex say those words.

She rolled her eyes as the Cargo Bay doors opened. They could see the planet looming ahead of them. Shepard grinned as she barreled out of the Normandy; soaring through the air as the ground came rushing toward them. She hit the thrusters at the very last minute, chuckling as she heard a high pitched noise from their drell occupant. Garrus and Wrex glared murderously at her.

“What do the scanners show, Garrus?” she asked, ignoring their irritation.

“No enemies in the vicinity,” Garrus answered her, his voice still holding a bite to it.
She noddedabsently, her eyes widening as she took in their surroundings. “Well, I have to give Saren points for taste. He sure knows how to pick his planets,” she commented as she took in the lush surroundings. She was impressed with the crystal clear water of the stream they were now driving through. Wildlife skittered around, or fled into nearby brush.

For the first few moments, it crossed her mind that their intelligence might have been wrong. It seemed too peaceful. But Garrus’ next words erased that doubt from her mind. “Shepard, we have marks,” he said with a grin. Shepard glanced back to see Wrex take the gun. Thane was tightly gripping the edge of his seat. So, Valern’s assassin was afraid of her driving. She found that amusing.

They rounded a corner and the fighting started. At first the enemies were mere annoyances. But as they moved further down the stream they met more geth and harder opposition. The Mako was taking a beating and there was nothing Shepard could do to avoid the gunfire. Her frustration was shown by her choice of words. They had the aliens in the Mako raising their brow ridges in amusement.

“Commander, we need to repair some of the shields before we continue,” Garrus told her. He was sticking with protocol, especially given her current mood.

“Fine, do what you can,” she sighed in annoyance as she stopped the Mako. Everyone but Wrex let out a sigh of relief. Garrus worked quickly, bringing half the shields back online. Wrex sat impatiently; keeping watch on the cannon’s targeting system. He didn’t want to be sitting here. He wanted to be fighting.

“That’s the best we are going to get, Shepard,” Garrus muttered as he glanced down at the Mako’s monitor.

Shepard resumed their original course, carefully guarding the Mako from enemy attack. She hesitated, bringing the vehicle to a halt when she saw a building up ahead. She could sense that something big was about to happen. Her gut was churning; not in fear, but warning. Wrex looked at her oddly when she slowed the vehicle to a crawl. He was surprised because he knew Shepard never drove safely. His eyes widened when he saw her drive toward a nearby group of boulders.
“Shepard, if you go that way, you’re going to flip the Mako,” Garrus snarled as he watched her drive directly at the rocks.

“If I go the other way, we’re going to be meeting our Maker sooner rather than later. Did you see what was past this little mountain?” she asked heatedly.

“No,” Garrus muttered, checking the radar. He cursed as he realized it was jammed. They were blind.

“An armature bigger than the one we went up against when we collected Liara, a smaller version of the same, and a large squad of geth,” she sneered as she used the small hill to give them some cover. “Wrex, you’re going to have to time your shots,” she warned him as she inched the Mako out.

Wrex readied himself and fired off shots when he had the chance. He was glad it was Shepard driving when both armatures decided to fire upon them at the same time. If anyone else had been in control of the Mako, they would have died. Shepard was the only one he knew who had guts enough to use thrusters this close to the boulders. One wrong move and the Mako would be on its back.

It took a while for the armatures to go down; when they finally did, she sighed in relief. “We have to disable that gun,” she told the team as they exited the Mako. They remained a great distance from the nearby building, wanting to scope out the opposition before engaging them.

“Shepard, they have snipers,” Garrus said, pointing them out. Though she looked toward the areas he was indicating, she still couldn’t see them. She envied turians for their sharp eyesight.

“If you can take them out, do it,” she ordered, trusting that he could pick them off from their current location. She noticed the drell had taken up aim, as well, with his sniper rifle.

“They’re too covered,” Garrus muttered, passing her his weapon. She looked through the scope, spotting the ghet he was talking about. She passed his gun back and focused on the balcony.

“Get ready, guys,” she murmured, unsure if they heard her. She let her biotics rush over her, using it to lift the four ghet into the air. Four shots rang out close to her. Someone was obviously rather quick with his rifle. She relaxed her hold on her biotics as the ghet were destroyed. For a moment she sagged as her body absorbed her energy once more. She wasn’t accustomed to using this much energy since her replacement implant was installed. It was tiring; not because of the amount she had to use, but because of the difference in implants. This implant allowed her to have better control over her biotics, but it forced her to focus more. It took great amounts of energy to maintain that focus.

Garrus moved up beside her when he saw her sag. “Shepard?” he questioned quietly.

“Don’t worry, I’m fine. Still adjusting to the new implant,” she muttered, straightening up.

She led the way up the steps. Thane followed her, not sure what he was supposed to do since she hadn’t issued orders. He followed the party, keeping a close eye on Wrex. The krogan glowered at him continuously, for reasons unknown to the drell. He didn’t really care. He was ordered on his mission by the Turian Councilor and he would follow through. The Councilor was a high paying customer who never sent Thane on a mission that would go against his own moral judgment. That was all that mattered to the assassin. Garrus stayed beside Shepard, watching her back as they cleared out the building. Wrex took over Garrus’ place as Garrus started working on disabling the large cannon.

“Let get back to the Mako,” Shepard ordered, moving quickly through the building toward the awaiting vehicle. They continued forward and Shepard hoped that they would soon reach their destination. She was quickly reaching the end of her patience.

~oooooooo~

Shepard glanced at her ground crew; huddled together outside the tattered tent, the drell among them. She was talking to Captain Kirrahe, the leader of the salarian STG task force sent by the Council to assess the situation on Virmire. So far what he told her wasn’t anything new to her. She assumed the facility would be heavily fortified. They came up with a plan, but it involved sending a member of her team with the STG members. She wasn’t pleased at all to be placing the safety of one of her own in the hands of strangers.

She stood there alone for a moment, trying to come up with her own plan. Garrus stepped up, interrupting her thoughts with a disturbing message. “Wrex is having a problem,” he told her quietly,
nodding toward the pacing krogan.
“He isn’t going to be a problem, is he?” Captain Kirrahe asked.
“You deal with your men, and I’ll handle my own,” she replied.
She walked over to Wrex, watching as he growled quietly. “What’s the problem, Wrex?” she asked when she reached him.
“You can’t destroy that facility. Saren found a way to destroy the genophage,” he said heatedly.
“Yes, he has. He’s created mindless krogans to do his bidding. Krogans that have no freewill or independent thought. You’re right. Not only has he managed to beat the genophage, but he has also brilliantly discovered a way to keep these krogans under his control. Do you really want that for your people?” she asked quietly.
Wrex barely heard her; his focus was on his people. Saren, their nightmare, had found a way to bring his race back. Her words slowly broke through his thoughts and indecision warred within him. He knew she was right, but this was for his people’s benefit. She spoke some more and his shoulders slumped. He hated to admit it, but she was right. He should have known Shepard wouldn’t wipe out something this important to his people without a damned good reason. No, he didn’t want his people under Saren’s control. He wanted his people free. Sure, they could fight for their freedom and win, but would these creations even be real krogans? They were only shells; mindless husks programmed to follow Saren’s every whim.
“I hear you, Shepard, you’re right. It needs to be destroyed, Saren needs to die,” Wrex stated heatedly.
“I’m glad we agree. Now let’s go show Saren what happens when he fucks with us,” she grinned, punching him on the shoulder.
“With pleasure,” he replied and gave her a menacing grin.
Garrus looked at her worriedly as she and Wrex returned to the crew. “Better talk to your mate before he thinks I overstepped my bounds,” Wrex grinned, shoving her lightly toward the concerned turian.
She moved over to Garrus. “Everything okay?” he asked.
“Yeah, now it is,” she answered absently. She turned to the rest of her crew, watching them for a moment. She could see the excitement and anticipation in their eyes. They all were hoping that Saren was going to be on the planet, just as she did. She wanted that turian dead so badly that she could almost taste it.
She knew they were ready. She didn’t need to ask. Her eyes moved to the unknown member of the team, Thane Krios. She didn’t know how he would be on this mission. Actually, she wanted him on board the ship instead of travelling with her.
~oooooooooooooo-
Slowly they made their way through the building; Krios included, much to Shepard’s dismay. He wouldn’t leave. Though she had to grudgingly admit that he was a dead shot and followed orders without a moment’s hesitation.
She thought for sure that she would have a hard time with Wrex when they took out the krogans, but she was pleasantly surprised to discover that he was the fiercest fighter on the team.
Garrus was her shadow; he always had her back, no matter what. Whenever she took cover, she knew that he was nearby. It felt good to know that someone was watching over her as she guarded her team. They took each room slowly, checking every computer they came across; looking for any pertinent information. She allowed Garrus to do the hacking. He had more patience with it than she did. Thane covered him as he worked. She didn’t know him well enough to trust him to that degree; but he did it, nonetheless.
Wrex always preceded the group, keeping an eye out for more enemies. They approached a door leading into an office complex. Wrex was poised, reading to charge into the thick of battle. They all stopped, gazing around the seemingly empty room. As they entered, a lone asari stood up, holding her hands out before her in surrender.
“Where is Saren?” Shepard asked coldly.
“He’s gone,” she whispered nervously.
“If I were you, I’d follow his lead and disappear, as well. I’m blowing this place sky high, whether you are here or not,” Shepard said and grinned as the girl panicked and fled the room. Garrus chuckled behind her. “You enjoyed doing that to her,” he said.

“Bet your ass I did,” Shepard grinned as she moved to the next door. She nodded at Wrex and he went in first. “Holy shit. He has a beacon here, too…” she trailed off as she made her way toward the recognizable Prothean artifact. “Krios, did you know about this?”

“No, this was never mentioned to me,” he murmured.

“An intact Prothean beacon, just like the one on Eden Prime,” she whispered as she moved closer to it. She heard gasps around her when she laid her hands on the panel in front of the beacon.

“Shepard, do you think this is a good idea?” Garrus asked nervously. Kaidan had told him what happened with the beacon on Eden Prime. He had been with her through some of the nightmares, trying to help her make sense of the visions. He was almost positive this beacon would be no different for her. There would be more sleepless nights, headaches, and nightmares.

“We need the information it has. I’m the only one who saw what was on the other beacon. Saren already has the information,” she told them absently. She moved forward slowly, the energy of the beacon catching her, holding her in its clutches. She didn’t fight it this time. She accepted the images – death, destruction, and the Reapers. The images were clearer, but still made no sense. They were all jumbled up but one – something called Ilos.

She gasped for air when the beacon finally released her. She stayed kneeling on the floor, gasping for breath. Garrus’ soothing hand helped her focus beyond the pain and pressure in her head.

“Shed the, there’s something else down here,” Wrex called to her. He eyed the panel and image before him warily. Something wasn’t right with all this, and he didn’t like it. He glanced over his shoulder at Shepard. She looked like hell. He watched her carefully, ignoring the drell that moved up beside him. He was an annoyance. The Councilor’s ‘pretty boy’, though even he had to admit that Krios could fight.

“What did you find?” she asked.

“You tell me,” Wrex said and stepped aside. He smirked as her eyes widened when she saw the object behind him.

He shook his head when she moved closer to the console. Humans were too inquisitive for their own good at times. He considered this one of those times. He readied his gun just in case, and the drell followed his lead. Wrex had to fight to keep from rolling his eyes. Shepard was leery about this. Her gut was telling her that something huge was about to happen. She didn’t know what and she wasn’t sure if she actually wanted to know.

“You are not Saren,” the holographic image hovering before her stated. Shepard’s eyes widened when she heard the voice mention Saren’s name.

“What is that? Some kind of VI interface?” Garrus asked curiously.

“Rudimentary creatures of blood and flesh. You touch my mind, fumbling in ignorance, incapable of understanding,” the image continued.

“I don’t think this is a VI…” Garrus muttered, his eyes widening.

“There is a realm of existence so far beyond your own, you cannot even imagine it. I am beyond your comprehension. I am Sovereign!” the mechanical voice told them.

“Sovereign isn’t just some Reaper ship Saren found. It’s an actual Reaper!” Shepard said, startled. She glanced back at her team. Garrus looked worried, Wrex looked annoyed and Krios was very focused on what was going on. She hoped he was memorizing this as he had everything else so far on this mission. She was sure she would need his support with the Council.

“Reaper? A label created by the Protheans to give voice to their destruction. In the end, what they chose to call us is irrelevant. We simply are,” Sovereign said.

“The Protheans vanished 50,000 years ago. You couldn’t have been there. It’s impossible!” Garrus snapped. She could hear the underlying worry in his voice.

“Organic life is nothing but a genetic mutation, an accident. You lives are measured in years and decades. You wither and die,” Sovereign declared. “We are eternal. The pinnacle of evolution and existence. Before us, you are nothing. Your extinction is inevitable. We are the end of everything.”
“Whatever your plan is, it’s going to fail. I’ll make sure of that,” Shepard sneered.
“Confidence born of ignorance. The cycle cannot be broken,” Sovereign told her.
“All cycles can be broken,” Wrex growled.
“What cycle are you speaking of?” Shepard asked irritably.
“The pattern has been repeated itself more times than you can fathom. Organic civilizations rise, evolve, advance. And at the apex of their glory, they are extinguished. The Protheans were not the first. They did not create the Citadel. They did not forge the mass relays. They merely found them; the legacy of my kind.” Sovereign said. Shepard closed her eyes, remembering a conversation she had with Liara. The asari mentioned that she believed the Protheans weren’t the first race to use mass relays. She was sure that there had been others who might have met the same fate. It made sense now, with what this Reaper was saying.

“Why would you construct the mass relays, then leave them for someone else to find?” Shepard asked. Her vision became clearer the more Sovereign spoke.

“Your civilization is based on the technology of the mass relays, our technology. By using it, your society develops along the paths we desire,” Sovereign explained. “We impose order on the chaos of the organic evolution. You exist because we allow it. And you will end because we demand it.”

“Shit! Move to the breeding facility. Once we set the nuke, Joker can do a pick up,” Shepard ordered, taking the lead.

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They made their way through the breeding facility, killing everything in their path. Garrus stayed at her side, Wrex made a path and Krios picked off those in the distance. She didn’t bother giving him orders. He wasn’t actually part of her team. She used her biotics as much as possible, taking some of the work off of Wrex.

They met up with the rest of their team in the center of the facilities courtyard. Shepard breathed a sigh of relief when the last krogan fell. “Kaidan, get the Nuke ready. We’re going to fetch Ashley before Joker lands.”

Shepard and her team moved quickly through the walkway toward the area they knew Ashley and the salarians were located. “Shepard, a drop ship is on its way to the bomb sight!” Ashley warned her.

“It’s already here,” Kaidan bit out. “The area is already swarming with geth.”

“Shit!” Shepard swore. Garrus watched her worriedly. “Kaidan, can you hold them off?” she asked.

“Shit, there is too many. I am activating the nuke,” Kaidan stated.

“What! Kaidan, give me a few minutes.” Shepard said.

“Commander, you know this nuke has to go off,” Kaidan said.

“He’s right, Commander. You can’t save me, but you have to make sure that nuke goes off,” Ashley said in a firm voice. Shepard knew she was right. If Kaidan hadn’t jumped the gun, she could have saved them both; but he had taken that choice out of her hands.

“Shit! Wrex, Thane, get back to the bomb. Garrus and I are going after Ashley,” Shepard ordered.

“Commander, there isn’t enough time for me to do two pickups,” Joker told her.

“Are you absolutely positive?” she asked hurriedly. Time was running out and something needed to be done.

“Yeah, Shepard. There is no way I can do it,” Joker said sadly.
“Fuck. I’m sorry Ashley, but that bomb takes precedence,” Shepard said sadly. She hated losing a person, especially when she was ordering that person to die for her.

“I understand, Commander. And I understand now what you were trying to teach me,” Ashley whispered before the com line went dead.

“Let’s move!” Shepard ordered.

~oooooooooo~

Saren! She should have guessed that he would show up. It was a dream come true seeing him there. She saw Garrus’ and Wrex’s sneer as the turian spoke, trying to explain his actions to her. She didn’t care what he had to say. She just wanted him dead. Shepard leapt out of her hiding place, finally facing her foe.

She opened herself to her biotics, letting it flow over her. Saren used his biotics, forcing her to move. She didn’t care; he wasn’t going to be with the living much longer. She let her biotics surge from her hands, flinging the energy at Saren. She had to hold back a bit. She didn’t want to lose control, not with her team so close and virtually unprotected.

She could see the modifications Saren had because of Sovereign. He was starting to look like a machine, not a turian. A part of her felt sorry for him. She knew he was under Sovereign’s control. But that couldn’t stop her from ending his miserable life. The Saren she was told about would have ended up like this at some point or another. The file she read on him told her that he needed to be stopped.

She dodged another volley, rolling out of the way. He jumped off his hover board, moving quickly toward her.

Garrus growled low in his throat when he saw Saren moving for Tania. His shots weren’t having much affect. He couldn’t get the right angle for killing shots. “I wouldn’t bother with the gun. He’s about to meet his maker. Look at your mate,” Wrex said. Shepard was glowing blue, a vicious smile on her face.

“You have caused me a lot of problems,” Saren sneered.

“No more than you’ve done for me. But that’s not why I am going to kill you. I’m going to kill you for Nihlus, and for my sister,” she spat. She attempted to move away from his outstretched hand, but wasn’t quick enough. He grabbed her by the throat, holding her suspended in the air.

“Nihlus was the only one who would have been able to stop me. He had to die. You can’t stop this,” Saren spat.

“Nihlus was a good turian. He deserved better than having you shoot him in the back like a coward,” Shepard hissed.

A flash of pain crossed Saren’s face as Tania’s biotics flowed over her. She grinned menacingly and let go of Saren’s wrist, using her hand to shove the dark energy that surrounded her at him. She laughed darkly as he dropped her, screaming. Quickly she scrambled to her feet, preparing to finish the turian off. Unfortunately, he had already scrambled to his hover board, severely injured. She watched him fly away, throwing curses at him.

“Shepard, we need to get out of here,” Wrex stated as Garrus grabbed onto her arm, trying to lead her away.

She nodded, her hand in Garrus’ as they ran for the Normandy. They leapt inside, the doors quickly closing behind them. She felt the ship take off and quickly rushed to the cockpit. Joker maneuvered the Normandy so she would see the nuclear explosion. She gave a silent prayer for those left behind as the mushroom cloud rose into the atmosphere.

She walked quietly back to her office, where she could be alone. The doors closed behind her and strong arms held her close. She hadn’t known she needed this; not until Garrus held her. She didn’t break down and cry, but she needed the support more than she could ever say. “You did the right thing, Tania. Don’t doubt yourself,” he murmured against the top of her head.

She looked up at her mate and saw his unwavering faith in her. He was giving her everything she needed at that moment; showing her that he still believed in her, even when her own faith was faltering.
Chapter 20

Shepard sat in her office, her head bowed. She knew she had to give the order to take Ashley’s life, but that didn’t make it any easier. Seeing one of your crew die wasn’t an easy thing; and having to order the person to give their life was a lot harder.

For the past few hours she had hidden herself in her office; needing time before she faced the crew. This wouldn’t be easy on any of them. For all they knew, Ashley could be the first of many friends they would lose. Saren still hadn’t been caught, so the chances of losing lives on this mission were high.

Garrus stayed down by the Mako. He knew Tania needed time to process all that had happened. He had been with her until she asked him to leave. At first he thought about arguing, but the look in her eyes told him that it was for the best.

He glanced over at the empty table where Ashley always worked. It was going to be different down here without her. She may have hated aliens, but her presence would still be missed. Garrus turned his focus to Wrex. The krogan was watching him so closely that it was almost unnerving.

“What is it, Wrex?” Garrus asked.

“There is something different about you,” Wrex told him. “You seem more confident than you were when we first boarded.”

Garrus shrugged, not sure how to answer. “Do you think we’ll lose more people before the end of this mission?” Garrus asked casually.

“Maybe, but does it really matter?” Wrex replied.

“No, not as long as Saren is stopped,” Garrus answered. There was a time when that would have bothered him. He was accustomed to using any means necessary to achieve a goal, but not to the point where it wouldn’t bother him to lose more lives.

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Kaidan sat in front of his computer, trying to focus on the job at hand; but the knowledge that they had lost one of their crew members was weighing heavily on him. In Alliance training they teach you to expect this, but seeing it in reality was altogether different. That could have been him, but instead Shepard had picked him to live. He didn’t understand why she chose to save him. It made no sense.

He felt guilty that he was left alive and Ashley died saving him; especially under the commander’s orders. That irked him. Shepard should have saved her, not him.

His head snapped up when he heard Shepard’s office door open. She walked out as if they hadn’t just lost a person. Even though her heartfelt speech not hours ago soothed the rest of the crew, it did nothing for him.

“Shepard, I need to talk to you,” Kaidan stated, trying to keep the anger out of his voice.

Tania stopped and searched Kaidan’s face. She could see that guilt was riding him hard. She knew he was looking for an argument so he could place the blame elsewhere, but she couldn’t allow that. Yes, the blame was hers, but she had been given no choice.

“What is it, Kaidan?” she asked calmly, waiting for the explosion.

Kaidan searched her face. She looked too calm, and that annoyed him even more. “Why did you choose me?” he asked, his tone cold.

“Do you want the cold truth or do you want me to soften it up for you?” Shepard asked bluntly. He was looking for an argument so he could place the blame elsewhere, but that annoyed her.

“The cold truth,” Kaidan replied, looked at her challengingly.

“Fine. What was our mission objective?” she asked.

“To destroy the facility,” he answered, not certain of her angle.

“How were we going to destroy the facility?” she asked patiently. This wasn’t the first time she had to make the facts known to someone who was in grief; nor would it be the last.
“By the nuke,” he answered irritably.

“Who had the knowledge to initiate the nuke? Also, who was the better fighter when it came to extreme odds?” she asked, a knowing look in her eyes.

“Ashley was the better fighter, and I was the one who could handle the nuke,” he answered. She could see the information registering, but he was still fighting the obvious truth.

“If blowing up the facility was our priority, then that nuke had to go off. My life, your life and anyone else’s life on this ship didn’t matter. We had to protect that nuke. There was too high of a chance that if we saved Ashley and left you to defend the nuke, they could have disarmed it after they killed you. I couldn’t take that chance. That nuke had to go off. My decision had nothing to do with your life or Ashley’s life personally. It had to do with who was at the nuke. If it was Ashley looking after the nuke, then she would be alive and you would be dead. That could be said for everyone else on this ship, including Garrus. If he was with the salarians, he wouldn’t be here, either,” she told him coldly.

Her words finally sunk in. She hadn’t made the decision out of emotion; she had made the most logical call. She would have sacrificed anyone to make sure that nuke went off. He couldn’t believe that she used Garrus as an example, but it showed him how serious she was about what she did.

“Thanks, Commander,” he murmured. He didn’t feel better, but he could accept it now. It would take time for him to accept that he lived; but now he didn’t have the guilt of thinking she only saved him because he was her friend, while she and Ashley hadn’t got along.

~oooooooooo~

Valern sat in his office chair, annoyed with the other two Councilors. They had already decided that Shepard was to be grounded. He had tried to talk them out of it, but any arguments on his part were wasted. It seemed that her insistence that the Reapers were coming was causing problems. If that got out, then the Council would have a very hard time keeping the public from panicking.

They looked at him suspiciously, so he stopped fighting. But there was no way he would sit idly by when Shepard was being screwed over; her own ambassador helping the Council to do it. He thought it was sad that this was all planned out before even seeing her and hearing her report. They would make it sound like the idea just came to them and then give her this blow.

There was no way he could allow this to happen. Shepard was right; the Reapers were coming and they needed her and her crew to help stop them.

He glanced at his terminal and winced as he saw an incoming message from Shepard. He couldn’t answer it here, not with the other two Councilors just doors away. She would have to wait. So he wrote her a quick message, telling her that he was busy. It sounded harsh; this would be the first time he shrugged her off and he didn’t like it.

He couldn’t believe his own reaction. He was the well-known ‘hater of humanity’, and yet he was actually worried about how one human was going to react to an email. He knew he was in deeper than he had a right to be. She had a mate; she proved that when she was in the hospital. He had no right wishing for anything else, yet he did.

He glanced at the top of his desk, emptied for the first time in a while. He smirked, relieved that he finished all his work for the day. Now he needed to figure out how to help Shepard and keep his position at the same time. He was worried that the other Councilors might have his room bugged, since they knew of his close relationship with Shepard.

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Shepard looked at her screen irritably. Valern hadn’t contacted her yet, which was very unusual. Since she had risen, she had been on edge. So to be safe they were making their way slowly to the Citadel, finishing a few missions along the way. Something wasn’t right, but she couldn’t figure out what it was.

With a final annoyed look at the computer she left, heading to grab something to eat. She was surprised to find everyone already eating along with Krios. Garrus automatically got up, grabbing her a plate as soon as he saw her leave her office.

“Anything yet?” he asked when she walked up beside him.

“No, and that's odd. Something must be going on,” she muttered.
“I think you’re jumping to conclusions,” Garrus smirked.
“Oh really, then why do I have a bad feeling?” she asked pointedly. She turned her attention to the table where her ground team sat, along with Liara and Tali. She heard two of them groan, Wrex had a huge grin and Kaidan wore a worried look.
“Shepard, any time you have a bad feeling it usually means the shit is about to hit the fan,” Kaidan muttered, scowling at her.
The five aliens looked confused at his choice of words. “He means things go really bad,” Tania explained to them as she took a seat.
“He’s right about that,” Wrex told her. “I like it when you have those gut feelings. Things get really interesting around here and I usually get to shoot more people,” he said and grinned.
“So what’s bothering you?” Tali asked, concerned.
“Not sure,” Tania muttered. She looked down at the plate in front of her. She didn’t really want to eat, but Garrus would worry if she didn’t. She glanced up at him, seeing the understanding in his eyes when he saw her hesitate.
“Do we have anymore missions lined up?” Garrus asked. The others turned their attention toward the couple, waiting for Shepard’s answer.
“A few. I’m not docking at the Citadel until I talk with Valern,” Shepard stated. She noticed that Krios raised a brow ridge, but no one else seemed disconcerted by her decision.
“What if the Turian Councilor doesn’t contact you?” Tali asked.
“If I don’t hear from him by tomorrow, we’ll head to the Citadel,” Shepard sighed, pushing her plate away.
“Shepard, you have an incoming call marked urgent from an unknown source,” Joker announced.
“Patch it through to my office,” Shepard ordered, a confused look on her face.
Garrus watched as she left. He knew the fact that Valern was avoiding her was bothering her. He even understood why it was bothering her, but that didn’t change the fact that he wanted that particular turian dead.
“Garrus, you’re growling,” Wrex chuckled.
~oooooooo~
Shepard took a seat at her desk and waited for Joker to transfer the message. She was shocked to see Valern’s holo image instead of an unknown. “Why are you using an unknown address, Valern?” she asked nervously.
Valern leaned back in his chair and purred as she spoke her name. He hated being the one to bring her bad news, but he had to. She didn’t deserve what they planned for her. “Tania, there’s a problem here. The two other Councilors agree with your ambassador that you’ve been creating too many waves,” he sighed, running a taloned hand down his face. His fatigue was starting to show. He had spent hours trying to figure out how they could get around this, to no avail.
“What’s going on?” Tania asked urgently.
“They’ve come to the agreement that you are to be grounded. You are to leave Saren alone, since they don’t consider him a threat anymore,” Valern answered her quietly. “They will call you to listen to your latest report and will then render a decision that they have already determined.”
“Shit! Valern, do you believe that Saren is still a threat?” she asked quickly.
“Yes, I believe that Saren is a threat, as are the Reapers,” he answered. “But at the moment my hands are tied. There is nothing I can do to help you. Not if I wish to keep my seat on the Council,” he told her softly.
“I know there is nothing you can do,” she said tiredly. “Now what the fuck am I supposed to do?” she asked, running a hand through her hair.
Valern softly growled, his anger building at seeing her upset. It affected him more than he thought it would. He closed his eyes for a moment and made his decision. “Meet me at my apartment later tonight. I’ll make sure that you’re able to leave,” he told her fiercely.
“No, I won’t have you risking your position for this,” she snapped.
“That is not your choice,” he argued with her. Didn’t she see that he was trying to protect her by
helping?
“Tough, I’m making it my choice. You are not placing your position on the line for this,” she told him firmly.
Valern couldn’t believe he had to stoop this low to get her agree; but at the moment, he would do anything to get her to listen. “Tania, please,” he asked softly.
She sighed, shaking her head. “Fine, I’ll be there later tonight,” she answered. She knew she made a mistake when she saw him grin. His mandibles flared wide, showing his sharp teeth. She knew that she had just pleased him greatly. He cut off communications before she could say anything else.
Shepard sat there for a bit, trying to figure out where she had gone wrong in her relationship with Valern. How had it gotten so out of control? He was acting like her mate; trying to protect her, and potentially giving up everything so she would be safe and happy. Garrus was her mate and she made sure Valern knew that, but somewhere she knew she had made a mistake.
She needed to talk to a turian and at the moment Garrus was the only one available. This was one conversation she wasn’t going to have with him. She could just see the fireworks that would come from that discussion. She would have to wait until she was on the Citadel and talk to Pallin; see if he could explain her mistake and tell her how she could rectify it.
“Joker, patch me through to Anderson,” she ordered, cringing when she heard the defeat in her voice.
She sat there patiently, waiting for Anderson’s holo to show. It didn’t take long, for which she was glad.
“What is it, Shepard?” he asked urgently. He knew she wouldn’t have contacted him if it wasn’t important.
“The Council has come to a decision regarding Saren before we even arrive at the Citadel. They are planning on grounding the ship and the crew with Saren still at large. We have proof that the Reapers are involved, but they are not willing to listen to reason,” she told him quickly.
“How did you come by this information?” he asked, shocked.
“Valern told me,” she answered, wondering what his reaction was going to be.
“Valern?” he inquired and looked at her questioningly.
“The Turian Councilor. He told me,” she explained, smirking at the stunned look on his face.
“Meet me at the Flux later tonight,” Anderson ordered, cutting off communications.
She leaned back in her chair, annoyed that everyone seemed to enjoy cutting her off in mid-conversation. With a rueful shake of her head, she tried to contact Valern to let him know of the change in plans. She used the anonymous account he had used to contact her.
She wasn’t shocked when he didn’t answer.
She took a seat next to Garrus, her hand resting on his leg beneath the table; where no one other than Wrex could see. “What’s the plan?” Garrus asked when she didn’t speak.
“We are heading to the Citadel. Everyone but Krios is to stay onboard. Krios, your coming with me to see the Council,” she told him.
~oooooooooo~
Garrus paced outside of Tania’s office door. He needed to talk to her about what happened when she bit him. It was too important to keep it from her. But it wasn’t more important than her current problems, and that was the only thing keeping him from entering. She had a lot on her plate right now and he was about to place more on it; if he got up the courage to go through the doors.
He glanced around the Mess Hall. No one seemed to care that he was pacing outside the Commander’s door. It shocked him that the humans were accepting of their relationship now, though he knew that hadn’t always been the case. Tania hadn’t received the disgusted looks or the sneers; the crew respected her too much for that. He had been the one who had received them. He was shocked that it hadn’t bothered him more, but he had been able to shrug it off.
He rumbled low, showing his frustration. He was about to walk away when Tania opened her door. “Garrus, how long are you planning to pace out here?” she asked, smirking at his surprised look.
He narrowed his eyes at her, slightly insulted by her humor; but she didn’t know the situation, so he couldn’t stay upset. “We need to talk,” Garrus told her, keeping his voice firm.
The smile vanished from her face and he felt remorse that he had taken it away. She motioned to her office chair, but he couldn’t sit at the moment. He had to keep moving; he was too nervous.

“What’s bothering you?” she asked softly. She didn’t try to calm him.

“It’s about what happened a few days ago,” he murmured, flinching when he saw the distance in her eyes.

She didn’t say a word; the only sign that she was listening was a quirk of her brow. Garrus knew that she wasn’t happy at the moment and he didn’t blame her. He could have picked a better time. He thought about dropping the subject and waiting until after they captured Saren, but he had other plans for them at that point.

“When I asked you to bite my neck, I should have warned you that there was meaning to it,” he stated hesitantly.

Tania sat in her chair, relief washing over her. This was what was bothering him? This she could handle. She started chuckling softly, though she knew it wasn’t the best time. She glanced at Garrus to gauge his reaction and he seemed amused, not insulted that she was laughing softly.

“What did you think I came here to talk about?” Garrus asked as he watched her curiously. He had never seen her look so relieved.

“I wasn’t sure. You seemed so serious that you had me worried that something else went wrong,” she grumbled.

“Well, you might still think that,” he murmured as he closed the space between them. “Do you know what it means for a turian to have a mate?” he asked.

“It’s similar to humans that are married,” she answered, slowly trying to figure out why he was asking.

“You know?” he asked, looking at her incredulously.

“Yes, Valern mentioned it and information on the extranet filled in the blanks,” she said, grinning at him.

“You’re not upset that I made you claim me?” He couldn’t believe that she wasn’t more upset. He was ecstatic that she wasn’t, but it was unnerving.

“Is that what you had me do? I wondered why your skin turned soft and had a slight film,” she grinned at him.

“Tania, what are you talking about?” Garrus asked sharply. Fear, uncertainty and shock ran through him.

“The skin on your neck went soft and a sweet tasting film covered it,” she told him slowly. Garrus shook his head in amusement. “That’s not possible,” he answered with a chuckle. She raised a brow questioningly at his comment. “You would have to be a female turian and in heat for my body to react like that. Trust me, you wouldn’t be leaving the room anytime soon if that was the case,” he answered her, a suggestive look in his eyes.

“Okay, that is odd,” she shrugged, leaving the topic for another time. She moved over to him, cupping the side of his face; her finger lightly brushing his mandible. “You don’t have to worry about wanting me to mark you; or about marking me. You are my mate, Garrus,” she said fiercely. Garrus growled, sweeping her up against his body; holding her tightly as he buried his face against the mark on her shoulder. His other hand swept down her body, eliciting a moan from her. He growled low in his throat, moving them over to the bed where he could claim his mate comfortably. Now he just needed to learn more about what marriage meant for humans. Once Saren was defeated, he planned on combining the two cultures’ rituals into one ceremony. But first he knew he would have to ask Tania.

~oooooooooo~

Tania and Krios walked the Presidium; her first stop was the Council and then she planned to visit Pallin. Anderson and Valern would have to wait. The assassin beside her was quiet, especially after overhearing her argument with Garrus. He wanted to be there with her, but she demanded that he stay on the ship.

“Don’t be shocked if they don’t believe you. I don’t expect them to,” she told him to fill the silence. “Why are you so sure of this?” he asked idly.
"I’ve already been informed of what the outcome will be. It’s not in my favor; that’s why I made Garrus stay onboard," she answered.

She walked up the aisle to face the Council. She listened as Thane gave his report. She noticed that Valern’s focus was on her and not what was being said. She tried to avoid his gaze so she didn’t give him any mixed signals; it was already a mess that needed to be fixed.

When her turn came, she answered the questions that the Council put to her. She was relieved to see that Valern played his part well. His hatred for humans came naturally and she had hoped that he would turn that hatred to her, so the other Council members didn’t find out that he was working against them.

Udina’s comments raised her anger another notch. She wanted this human dead in the worst possible way. She scowled at him the more he talked. Her gazed flicked to Krios, noticing that his hands were clenched into fists at his sides.

Then she was dismissed - the only thing she had been looking forward to in this meeting. “What did you think?” Tania asked the drell as they walked away.

“That this was planned,” he answered calmly, as if the meeting hadn’t fazed him.

“It was,” she told him coldly. She glanced over Krios’ shoulder, her eyes lighting up as she watched Valern move toward them.

“Tania, you can’t kill Udina. Nor can you hire him to do it,” Valern told her sternly, nodding toward Krios.

“Oh, I know. I don’t plan on killing him. But I plan on taking my ship after Saren, one way or another,” she told him harshly.

“Then meet me at my apartment and only use the new extranet link I gave you to contact me from now on,” Valern told her softly so that the others wouldn’t overhear.

“I will, but I have a few other stops to make,” she replied. Their conversation so far had been awkward, at least for her. She didn’t want to say anything that would give him hope and he was trying to keep their interaction friendly.

She watched Valern walk away and then turned toward Krios. He stood silently watching her. “It looks like you’re free to go,” she told him.

“It was a pleasure working with you, Commander Shepard,” he said, bowing low to her out of respect. “I hope in the future we can work together again.” She watched him blend in with the crowd and disappear before her eyes. Tania shook her head, shocked and amused. She knew he had skills, but she hadn’t expected that.

She moved through the crowds toward Pallin’s office, hoping he would still be working. Just as she thought, he was sitting behind his desk going over a datapad. “Shepard, good to see you. Have a seat,” Pallin invited with a motion of his hand. “What can I do for you?”

“I think I may be having some problems with a turian and I need help deciding how to handle it,” she told him quietly.

Pallin left his desk and walked over to his door, locking it so they wouldn’t be bothered. “What is the problem and which turian do I need to talk to?” he asked with an angry growl. He could smell Garrus’ scent from here, so any Turian that imagined she was available was going to answer to him.

“Well, you are not going to like this. I need your input, but this time you can’t step in. Councilor Valern is the turian,” she answered and smirked when his eyes widened in shock.

“Shéopard, I can’t get Valern to like humans. He is not going to change his outlook toward you. You, like every other human, will just have to accept his hate,” Pallin told her as he returned to his chair.

“That is where you are wrong. When I was in the hospital having my implant replaced, Valern was there. I had to make a choice between him and Garrus. I chose Garrus. I am Garrus’ mate and have accepted his mark. I know Valern still has feelings for me and I don’t know what to do or how to warn him off,” she explained sadly.

Pallin’s eyes opened wider the more she talked. He should have known that if anyone could get through to Valern, it would be Shepard. It appeared that even the Councilor wasn’t immune to her charm. She was more turian than human, as far as he was concerned.

“I don’t know how to help you. He is a Council member and that makes this situation precarious.
You need to be blunt with him. Don’t hide from him or he will think that you are still interested. Don’t allow him to touch you in any way, except as friends. Make sure he leaves your neck alone or Garrus will hunt him down,” Pallin answered her thoughtfully, trying to think of anything else she may need to know. “I don’t know what else to say, Shepard. You have two turians after you and more turian friends than any human I know.”

“Thanks for the help; however, I do have one more question. What does it mean when the skin on a turian’s neck goes soft and has a sweet taste and smell to it?” she asked cautiously.

“It means you are turian and you are in heat,” he answered bluntly. What she was describing was a very personal thing to turians. “Where did you see this happen?”

“Um…the between me and Garrus once,” she answered and her cheeks turned bright red. Pallin didn’t push for details, but he was curious.

“That is odd. Allow me to make some inquiries and I’ll get back to you about it,” he suggested.

“After tonight I am not sure if you will want to talk with me. The Normandy is forbidden to leave the Citadel,” she said quietly. She didn’t elaborate, but she could see the understanding in his eyes.

He made sure she could see that she had his support without ever saying the words. “Yes, well I’ll be sending you that information as soon as I can,” he stated pointedly.

“Thanks. I should be going now. I have to talk to Captain Anderson and then Valern,” she smirked tiredly.

Pallin watched her walk out, a worried look on his face. As soon as the door closed, he opened a channel to Valern. He was shocked that he answered right away and was dressed in casual clothes.

“What do you want, Pallin?” Valern asked coldly. He didn’t want to be hounded by politics right now; Shepard was going to arrive soon.

“I want to know why in the Spirits you grounded Shepard with Saren still out there. He is still a threat,” Pallin growled.

“I didn’t ground her, the rest of the Council did. Once Shepard shows up here tonight she will be leaving the Citadel and I won’t be a Councilor anymore,” he told Pallin.

“What? Are you insane? She needs you on the Council! And you need to remember that she’s mated,” Pallin stated coldly. He had to remind Valern, whether he wanted to or not. Garrus could get into a lot of trouble if he retaliated against something Valern might do to Shepard.

“I know she is. As for what I plan, it is not your concern.” Pallin bit out before closing the channel.

“Valern bit out before closing the channel. Pallin sat back in his chair, unnerved by the emotion he saw in Valern’s eyes. The man loved her and he knew it. Shepard will have to tread carefully from now on while dealing with Valern. It wouldn’t matter how many times she told him to back off, Valern will still be there. He was treating her like a mate when she wasn’t. This could be a dangerous game if Valern suddenly decided to change the rules.

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Shepard finished talking with Captain Anderson, pleased that she had a plan that didn’t involve Valern. She headed to Valern’s apartment and was shocked to find that it wasn’t that far from hers. In fact, it was just up the stairs in the richer section. Hers was the higher middle class, and his was just above her. That made her hesitate for a moment; discovering that the Councilor had lived so close to her and yet they had never crossed paths.

He answered on the first knock. He was happy to see her. It had been a while since he saw her in the flesh. He knew he couldn’t do anything with her, but he could allow her scent to soothe him.

Hopefully he will be able to feel her touch, even if it was only as friends. No matter his limitations, it was worth it to have her near.

He motioned her in and moved to the kitchen, bringing her coffee. “I already have a plan set in motion to leave the Citadel,” she told him firmly. Relief and betrayal swept through him.

“Why didn’t you allow me to help you?” he asked angrily.

“Because anything you would have done would have cost you your position and I can’t do that to you. The best thing you can do for me is remain a Councilor. You want to help me? Then keep your seat and don’t ever lose it,” she said sternly.

He closed his eyes. The feeling of betrayal was gone. He could tell that she was distancing herself
from him, and he hated it. It was his own fault for torturing himself. He moved over to her, taking in her scent at the same time. He hesitated, this time using his tongue to take her scent. He stopped where he was, looking at her in shock. “Shepard, you have to leave,” he ordered. His plates were fully shifted, and lust roared through him.

“Valern, what’s going on?” she asked, edging toward the door. She knew what a turian looked like when aroused and Valern was definitely aroused. She would bet his plates were fully shifted and that put her on alert.

“Tell your mate to scent you. He will explain. Now, leave!” he nearly shouted, his eyes tightly closed. That had been too close; he almost took her….

He couldn’t believe it. Shepard was in heat. If he didn’t care for her so much, he would have ignored the repercussions and sated his lust; but he couldn’t do that to her. What confounded him was that she was human and shouldn’t have that scent. He’d been around humans and they never had emitted this particular essence. They had a scent to them at certain times; but it wasn’t strong, and was easily ignored. Shepard’s had been strong, enticing. He yearned to hold her; to take her and release his need within her.

He knew then that he was further gone than he ever believed possible. As far as he was concerned, Shepard was his unmarked mate. He could never call her anything other than that; his feelings toward her wouldn’t allow that.

He loved her.

Shepard raced for the Normandy, typing out a message to Anderson along the way. In a few minutes she would be leaving the Citadel as a fugitive. She just hoped that her crew would stand behind her on this one.

“Joker, get ready to leave,” she said hurriedly.

Joker grinned. He knew Shepard wouldn’t fail in finding a way to get them off the station. He knew they would be fugitives, but at the moment he didn’t care. He started his exit procedures, waiting for the pad to be disengaged. Once he had the green light, he would take them out quickly and quietly.

Shepard made her way to Garrus. She found him working on the Mako. She knew he was upset and she needed to talk to him. She walked over to him, placing a hand on his shoulder. He didn’t shrug her off but neither did he turn to her.

“Garrus, can we talk for a moment?” she asked softly.

Garrus sighed. It was impossible to remain mad at her. He could smell many scents on her, but none of them challenged him. “What is it?” he asked without turning.

“I spoke with Valern at his apartment…” She stopped dead when he turned lethal eyes to her, grabbing her roughly by the shoulders; taking in her scent deeply. A low rumbling growl escaped him as he moved closer, using his tongue to take a deeper scent. He stopped, shocked at what he smelled. He tested once more, and his body reacted to the scent automatically. His plates shifted fully, the leathery skin on his neck softening, his mouth began to water – Shepard was in heat.

“What did he do?” Garrus asked, fighting for control of his body as he quickly led her to her room.

“He told me to ask you to scent me and then kicked me out,” she answered, trying to keep up with him as he raced through the ship.

The door of her room closed behind her and she found herself pinned up against the wall, her shirt ripped away. She gasped as Garrus yanked her pants off without warning. He lifted her, driving himself deep into her. At first it hurt a lot, but her body adjusted quickly to the intrusion. Garrus knew he should be taking it easier on her, but he couldn’t. His body was in control right now and his mate was in heat, accepting him. He could feel himself filling her more than she was used to, but he couldn’t stop. He could feel his neck fully weeping, his marking fluid waiting for her bite. His teeth were already latched deep into her shoulder.

Shepard’s body filled with pleasure as she adjusted to Garrus’ rough treatment. She moaned as she felt him grow larger within her. It was odd; something she hadn’t experienced before. She whimpered in pleasure as he bit her, his hand urging her toward his neck.
She licked his neck, noticing the thick film flowing from it. She moaned as the sweet tasting liquid hit her tongue. She pressed her teeth firmly against his softened skin without breaking the skin. “Bite me, my Mate,” Garrus commanded with a growl.

She bit down forcefully, breaking through the softened skin. The sweet tasting fluid filled her mouth and she drank it down. Her body burned as Garrus roared his release, entering her deeper than he ever had before. She gasped with pleasure and pain as she found her release. She expected him to withdraw, but he didn’t. Slowly he slid down the floor, still buried deep within her.

None of this made sense to her, but at the moment she didn’t mind in the least. She knew something was very different - he still filled her fully, as if he hadn’t found his release. She went to climb off of him but he held her tightly; growling against her shoulder, his teeth still imbedded in her skin.

“Garrus, you have to let me go. I have work to do,” she told him softly, gasping in pain as he clamped down harder.

Slowly Garrus let her shoulder go, but stayed locked with her. “Garrus, you have to let me up,” she stated sternly.

Garrus focused on her panting. “I can’t, not until my body is finished,” he told her, shifting his hips so she would understand what he meant.

“What’s happening?” Tania asked breathlessly.

“You’re in heat. Your scent says you are,” Garrus groaned as he ejaculated within her once more. They stayed locked together until Garrus softened and left her body. Tania was sore; the lust having left her body a while ago. “What the hell was that all about?” she growled angrily.

“You smelled like a turian female in heat,” Garrus groaned.

“Fine, but the next time there had better be preparation,” she bit out as she struggled to her feet. She was not impressed with him. As pleasurable as it had been in the beginning, it still hurt when her body was no longer lubricated.

“I am sorry. I never meant to harm you. The next time I’ll be in better control. It just caught me off-guard,” Garrus muttered, feeling ashamed of his behavior.

Shepard felt guilt eat at her. She knelt down in front of her mate and nuzzled the side of his face, showing that she forgave him. She smiled as he purred, his clawed hand gently running through her hair.
Shepard lay back in her bed with a small smile, thoroughly sated. After numerous rounds of vigorous lovemaking, she had finally forced Garrus to stop. Her body simply couldn’t take anymore. She thought she would have a harder time in his current state, but it had actually been quite easy. The words ‘no’ and ‘stop’ seemed to register and he reacted in the flick of a switch. What pleased her most was that he didn’t push for more. He wasn’t upset and he didn’t make her feel bad for stopping him.

He held her for a long while before leaving for his own quarters. He had been honest with her, telling her that the temptation was too great for him at the present time. Now he was in his own bed sleeping, she hoped. She needed to get some sleep of her own before morning shift started. After she found out that she smelled like a turian in heat, she had Chakwas examine her and found out that she was indeed ovulating. However, she couldn’t become pregnant by a turian. Chakwas was surprised that Garrus could tell her condition by scent alone. When she returned from the appointment, she wasn’t surprised to find Garrus waiting for her. Though she still didn’t understand how Garrus or Valern could tell she was ovulating. It was odd, considering they were a different species altogether.

So her mate knew when she was ovulating. This was going to be so much fun, she thought with a grin. Poor Garrus was going to have to go through this for a few days every month. Later, after he had some rest, she would tell him the good news. At least she was at the end of her cycle. The downfall was that she would be starting her period soon. Oh, yay! Something to look forward to, she thought sarcastically.

It didn’t take long for sleep to claim her and the dream that haunted her to show up. Flashes turned into images, images turned into a message; the message haunted her. The Reapers were coming to harvest them. She was the only thing standing in the way; the only one who was willing to stop them.

Images of people dying or being captured flashed before her eyes. The images were laced with fear and panic; though whether hers or theirs, she wasn’t sure. Faces mouthed words that she couldn’t understand. People strapped down, screaming; screams that she would never hear. The images said it all; there was no need for vocals.

She felt someone pull her close, breaking her from the dream. She didn’t need to see who it was; she knew by his scent and the feel of his body. Garrus was here for her, even though it was a struggle for him to be with her right now without becoming intimate.

Tania curled up to him, allowing his strength to envelope her. She hummed her pleasure softly, feeling him so close. This was her security. This was where she belonged - with her mate. She kept her face from his neck and her hands well away from his waist. She made sure she didn’t do anything to tempt him any more than he already was.

Garrus purred contentedly as she moved closer to him. He smiled, his mandibles flaring out; showing his pleasure. He ran his talon through her thick dark hair gently, enjoying the silky feel as it slipped free.

~oooooooooo~

“Shepard, we have a problem,” Joker warned her as everyone stood on the bridge; watching the planet Ilos appear in the distance.

“Have they seen us yet?” she asked, noticing the four geth ships that were surrounding the planet.

“No, our cloaking is in place and we aren’t close enough,” Joker answered.

“Take us down,” she ordered.

“Not possible, Commander. The closest place is a few clicks away,” Pressly told her.

“Drop us in the Mako,” she ordered.

“Not enough room. You need at least a hundred meters for a drop, and there is only twenty meters available,” Pressly argued.

“I can do it,” Joker stated with certainty. Shepard met his eyes. “I can do it,” he repeated firmly.
“Garrus, Wrex, Kaidan, meet me at the Mako,” she ordered before turning back to Joker. “Drop us right on top of that asshole,” she growled.

“With pleasure, Commander,” Joker grinned. “Make sure you give him a greeting that he will never forget.”

“Don’t worry. He’ll remember everything until his last breath,” Shepard stated fiercely.

She moved down to the Mako quickly. Garrus and the others were already onboard, waiting for her. Garrus was in the passenger seat, Wrex was seated next to the weapon controls; and Kaidan sat next to Wrex, going over information on this omnitool.

Shepard felt the ship descend at a sharp angle and smiled. She had to hand it to Joker - he knew how to fly. She waited for the doors to open and gunned the Mako out of the hatch. As soon as they cleared the ship, she hit the thrusters. They didn’t have room for fucking around this time.

Garrus growled low as the Mako landed in a narrow passageway. They watched helplessly as Saren vanished through a thick stone doorway that they couldn’t breach. “There has to be a way to open it in this complex,” Garrus muttered as they all bailed out of the Mako.

“Wrex, you have lead. Kaidan, you’re with me. Garrus, watch our backs,” she ordered, allowing her biotics to flare over her as they engaged the nearby geth.

“Shepard, there are too many of them for our normal routine to work,” Wrex grumbled as his shields were quickly disabled.

“Fine, Wrex, take cover. We don’t have time to fuck around,” she growled, her frustration rising. She heard Wrex chuckle. “Music to my ears, Shepard,” he replied as he watched her move toward a large group of protected geth. He watched three of them fly into the air and he and Garrus quickly dispatched them. “Your mate is pissed,” Wrex chuckled as they repeated the destruction of another group of airborne enemies.

“Yep, I’d hate to be Saren when this chase is over,” Garrus grinned as he fired his gun once more. Both he and Wrex stayed in hiding, where it was safest. He would rather be by his mate’s side, but he knew this mood well and any sane man would hide and let her vent her anger on the enemy.

“Want to place a bet?” Wrex asked deviously, waiting for the next batch of geth to arrive.

“What’s the wager?” Garrus asked cautiously as he added two more opponents to his kill total.

“I say Shepard’s going to use her biotics to enhance her strength and beat him that way. I don’t think she’s going to do this one from a distance,” Wrex said thoughtfully.

“You’re probably right, considering the mood she’s in. There is a high chance that she might even lose control this time,” Garrus smirked. He knew his mate, and she was dangerously close to the edge at this point. When she met Saren, there was no telling what she would do.

“I think you are both wrong. I think Shepard is going to talk him down,” Kaidan murmured, grinning when their heads snapped his way; looking at him incredulously.

“The pot a hundred credits?” Wrex asked and grinned at them. Kaidan and Garrus returned the smile, nodding in agreement.

“So who the hell wants to help me with these two armatures?” Shepard yelled out when no one moved forward following the destruction of the final geth.

Garrus and Wrex swore as they ran over to her. Kaidan cursed a blue streak, moving quickly to aid Shepard. The three of them breathed a sigh of relief when the two armatures finally fell. “Gee, thanks for the help,” Shepard hissed snidely as she glared at the three of them. “Let’s move!” she ordered coldly as she took the lead.

Garrus walked beside her, with Kaidan and Wrex covering their backs. “Sure you don’t want to change your bet, Human?” Wrex asked with a grin.

“No, Shepard goes for diplomacy most of the time,” Kaidan reminded him.

“Yes she does, but not when she’s as angry as she is now,” Wrex reminded him. He watched the human’s eyes widen and he mouthed words that the krogan didn’t catch.

They raced through the complex, taking out any geth they came across. Shepard wasn’t holding back with her biotics. She was in a hurry to get her hands on Saren. They were so close that she could taste it.

They arrived at an ancient terminal. Garrus checked it over, but it was foreign to him. “I don’t know
what this says,” he muttered, looking at Shepard helplessly. Tania moved up beside her mate, resting a hand on his arm in understanding. Without hesitating, she pressed a series of buttons, and a holo image popped up; repeating a series of foreign sounds. “Too bad we can’t understand what it’s saying,” Garrus muttered. “I can, but its missing a section,” she hissed irritably.

Garrus searched her face. He was about to ask her what it said, but decided against it. He knew it wasn’t the right time. She was focused on one thing right now and he could see her frustration at not receiving a full explanation. He shook his head at Kaidan when he opened his mouth to speak.

They followed her as she rushed toward the Mako. The doors that had been closed to them before were now open wide. They barreled down a stone hallway. There was only one direction to go and nothing was going to stop her. The Mako was at full thrust, and anything in her way was doomed to be overrun. Garrus was glaring at her, and Kaidan had his eyes closed while he mumbled a prayer beneath his breath. Wrex grinned until she ran over a very large root that nearly flipped them. Then his grin changed into a scowl as he glared angrily at her.

“Are those pods? What do you think they were for?” Garrus asked thoughtfully, looking at the walls that were flying past the viewport.

Shepard slowed down, examining the area closely. “Yes, they are pods. I hope they are empty or we are looking at the graves of thousands of Protheans,” she murmured sadly.

Silence descended in the cabin as the Mako sped down the corridor. They encountered few enemies, and that fact struck her as odd. She didn’t like it; it was too easy. Garrus kept his gaze on the scanner, but shook his head when he saw no enemies.

“Tania, I don’t like the looks of this,” he muttered.

“Neither do I,” she sighed, slowing down to avoid colliding with a barrier that appeared before them. “Anyone want to tell me how to turn that thing off?” she asked snidely, glaring in frustration. The barrier was keeping her from Saren and she was furious.

“There’s a door to the right,” Kaidan commented.

“Well, let’s hope that has the answers we need,” she muttered. They really needed that shield down. They exited the Mako, walking cautiously toward the elevator. Tania was the last one to leave; the nerves in her stomach worse than ever.

“Tania?” Garrus asked softly, giving her a searching look.

“It’s nothing. I just feel uneasy,” she murmured.

“Oh man, that doesn’t sound good,” Kaidan grumbled. “I’d prefer it if you said that something bad is coming.”

“Sorry, Kaidan, but it doesn’t feel like that right now. It’s…. I don’t know how to explain it,” she shrugged.

“Man, that sounds worse,” Kaidan grumbled, rolling his eyes. Shepard was the first commanding officer whose gut instincts he trusted implicitly. Though he took most officers’ concerns with a grain of salt, Shepard’s feelings usually led him to expect the worst. This time her words didn’t sit well with him. They made his more nervous than he had been since they’d landed.

Garrus chuckled with amusement. He was finally getting used to Shepard’s ‘feelings’. If she didn’t know what the problem was, then it was going to be a big one.

The elevator stopped and the four of them stepped out; Shepard in the lead. She walked slowly over to a nearby terminal.

“Be careful,” Garrus warned, moving close to his mate; standing by her side protectively. Shepard took a step back when a holo image popped up, and started talking.

“You are not Prothean. But you are not machine, either. This eventuality was one of many that was anticipated. This is why we sent our warning through the beacons,” the mechanical voice said.

“Looks like some kind of VI program. Pretty badly damaged,” Garrus murmured.

“I do not sense the taint of indoctrination upon any of you. Unlike the other that passed recently. Perhaps there is still hope,” the holographic image murmured.

Kaidan looked shocked. “Wait a minute. How come we can understand you when every other interface was speaking in the Prothean language?” he asked curiously. Shepard looked at him in
surprise. She hadn’t realized that they could understand what was being said.

“I have been monitoring your communications since you arrived at the facility. I have translated my output into a format you will comprehend,” the AI explained. “My name is Vigil. You are safe here, for the moment. But that is likely to change. Soon, nowhere will be safe.”

“Are you some kind of artificial intelligence program?” Shepard asked.

“I am an advanced non-organic analysis system with personality imprints from Ksad Ishan, chief overseer of the Ilos research facility,” Vigil told them.

Shepard glanced back at her crew with a raised brow, not sure what to make of this new turn of events.

“Why did you bring me here?” Shepard asked, taking up a relaxed pose. Her interest grew the more this holo talked. She hoped they would finally get some of the answers they had been seeking.

“You must break a cycle that has continued for millions of years. But to stop it, you must understand or you will make the same mistake we did,” Vigil answered. “The Citadel is the heart of your civilization and the seat of government. As it was with us, and as it has been with every civilization that came before us. But the Citadel is a trap. The station is actually an enormous mass relay. One that links to dark space - the empty void beyond the galaxy horizon. When the Citadel relay is activated, the Reapers will pour through. And all you know will be destroyed.”

“How come nobody noticed the Citadel was an inactive mass relay?” Wrex asked gruffly, watching the holo image with distrust.

“The Reapers are careful to keep the greatest secret of the Citadel hidden. That is why they created a species of seemingly benign organic caretakers. The Keepers maintain the stations most basic functions. They enable any species that discovers the Citadel to use it without fully understanding the technology. Reliance on the Keepers insures that no other species will ever discover the Citadel’s true nature. Not until the relay is activated and the Reapers invade,” Vigil answered.

“How do the Reapers survive out in dark space?” Garrus asked.

“We have only theories,” it continued. “The researchers here came to believe the Reapers enter prolonged states of inactivity to conserve energy. This allows them to survive the thousands and thousands of years it takes for organic civilization to rebuild itself. But in this state they are vulnerable. By retreating beyond the edges of the galaxy, they insure no one will accidently discover them. They keep their existence hidden until the Citadel relay is activated.”

“The Reapers can wipe out the Council and the entire Citadel fleet in a single surprise attack!” Shepard stated, shock and horror rushing through her.

“That was our fate. Our leaders were dead before we even realized we were under attack. The Reapers seized control of the Citadel and through it, the mass relays. Communication and transportation across our empire were crippled. Each star system was isolated; cut off from the others. Easy prey for the Reaper fleets. Over the next decade, the Reapers systematically obliterated our people. World by world, system by system, they methodically wiped us out.” Vigil explained.

“Some of you must have managed to survive,” Shepard commented. That was the only thing that would explain Vigil’s presence. It had too many answers for there to be no survivors.

“Through the Citadel, the Reapers had records of our maps and census data,” the AI replied.

“Information is power and they knew everything about us. Their fleets advanced through every settled region of the galaxy. Some worlds were utterly destroyed. Others were conquered, their population enslaved. These indoctrinated servants became sleeper agents under Reaper control. Taken in as refuges by other Protheans, they betrayed them to the machines. Within a few centuries the Reapers had killed or enslaved every Prothean in the galaxy. They were relentless, brutal and absolutely thorough.” Shepard listened, a sad expression on her face. This would be the same thing that would happen to them if she didn’t do something.

“What do the Reapers get out of this? Why do they keep repeating this pattern of genocide over and over?” Shepard asked in confusion.

“The Reapers are alien, unknowable. Perhaps they need slaves or resources. More likely, they are driven by motives and goals that organic beings cannot hope to comprehend. In the end, what does it matter? Your survival depends on stopping them, not in understanding them,” Vigil stated logically.
“I don’t understand. Where did the Reapers go after they conquered your people?” Shepard asked. She had an idea, but she needed to make sure that she was right.

“Our worlds were stripped bare, harvested by the indoctrinated slaves,” the AI replied. “Everything of value - all resources and all technology was taken. Certain that all advanced organic life had been extinguished, the Reapers retreated back through the Citadel relay into dark space; sealing it behind them. All evidence of the Reaper invasion had been wiped away. Only their indoctrinated slaves were left behind, abandoned. Mindless husks no longer capable of independent thought, the indoctrinated soon starved or died of exposure. The genocide of the Protheans was complete.” The more Shepard heard, the more she knew that the Reapers had to be stopped; no matter the cost. She knew even after this fight, it wouldn’t be done.

“You said you brought me here for a reason. Tell me what I need to do,” Shepard stated quickly.

“The Conduit is the key. Before the Reapers attacked, we Protheans were on the cusp of unlocking the mystery of the technology behind the mass relays. Ilos was a top secret facility. Here researchers worked to create a small scale version of a mass relay. One that linked directly to the Citadel; the hub of the relay network,” Vigil explained to them.

“The Conduit is not a weapon. It’s a back door onto the Citadel!” Kaidan said, shocked.

“How did you manage to stay hidden?” Shepard asked curiously.

“All official records of our project were destroyed in the initial attack on the Citadel. When the Prothean Empire came crashing down, Ilos was spared. We severed all communication with the outside and our facility went dark. The personnel retreated underground into these archives. To conserve resources everyone was put into cryogenic stasis. I was programmed to monitor the facility and wake the staff when the danger had passed. But the genocide of an entire species is a long, slow process. Years passed. Decades… centuries. The Reapers persisted. And my energy reserves were dwindling,” Vigil explained.

She knew without being told what happened. To survive to get them this message, this VI had to cut resources from certain pods, killing the inhabitants.

“So all the Protheans perished?” Shepard asked quietly.

“No, the top scientists survived. They researched ways to stop the Reapers from returning. They found out that the Keepers were the key. The Keepers are controlled by the Citadel. Before each invasion a signal is sent through the computer, telling the Keepers to activate the Citadel Relay. After decades of feverish study, the scientists discovered a way to alter the signal. Using the Conduit, they gained access to the Citadel and the modifications. This time when Sovereign sent the signal to the Citadel, the Keepers ignored it. The Reapers are trapped in dark space,” Vigil answered her.

“Saren must have some plan to undo everything you did,” Shepard commented thoughtfully.

“The one you call Saren has used the Conduit to bypass the Citadel’s defenses. Once inside, he will transfer control of the station to Sovereign. Sovereign will override the Citadel system and manually open the relay and the cycle of extinction will begin again.”

“Is there any way we can stop them?” Shepard asked urgently.

Vigil paused only a moment before responding. “There is a data file in my console. Take a copy when you go. When you reach the Citadel master control unit, upload it to the station. It will corrupt the Citadel security protocols, giving you temporary control over the station. It might give you a chance against Sovereign.”

“Wait, where is the Citadel’s master control until? I’ve never heard of anything like that.” Garrus asked, shocked.

“Shep, head for the Citadel. Tell them everything you heard. We need everyone working together. Your best bet would be to speak directly to the Turian Councilor.
Notify him that I gave the order,” Shepard told him.
“Will do, Commander,” Joker stated.

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Joker hacked into Shepard’s files and found Valern’s address. He quickly created a link to the turian, praying that he hadn’t just signed his death warrant.
Valern answered Shepard’s call right away. He was shocked to see a human that he didn’t know using her link. “You better have a good reason for using this link!” Valern growled.

“Shepard told me to contact you. The Citadel is a large mass relay to dark space, where the Reapers are located. Saren’s ship is already on its way there to open the relay. Shepard ordered the fleet to amass, and the Citadel will be under attack shortly,” Joker told him brusquely.

“Sovereign is a Reaper and on its way here?” Valern snarled. He was shocked to hear that the Citadel would be under attack; that Saren would be stupid enough to do something like that. “I’ll take care of things here,” Valern replied, cutting communications.

Quickly he went to the other Councilors and told them the information he now had. He could see their hesitancy, but he was pleased when they didn’t argue and headed for the Destiny Ascension. He rushed to his office, grabbing a few datapads he had been working on before moving quickly to the docking bay.

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Shepard and her team left quickly, jumping into the Mako. The door was barely closed when Shepard gunned it. “Wrex, keep on those guns. I’m rushing through this,” she warned him.

Garrus and Kaidan held on to their seats for dear life, glaring at Shepard. “You do realize that the gravity is different here, Shepard,” Kaidan commented.

“Tania, is that the relay?” Garrus asked, motioning toward an energy field in the distance.

“Yep, that would be it,” she muttered, picking up speed so she could barrel through the geth and armature that were waiting for them. “Wrex, keep shooting ahead of us,” she ordered, grimacing as she watched the shields dwindle down to virtually nothing.

Shepard held her breath as they barreled toward the relay. “Hold on, guys,” she yelled just before they entered the shimmering light.

Shepard closed her eyes as they warped through the relay. She prayed silently as they soared through space. She knew that what felt like minutes to her team was actually only seconds. Her eyes snapped opened as she was jarred forward. The Mako slammed into the ground of the Citadel, knocking her breath from her lungs. She grimaced at the sounds of screeching metal; indicators of far greater problems with the vehicle.

“Everyone alive?” Shepard groaned, holding her head.

“Yeah, barely,” Kaidan replied, shaking his head slowly to clear the fog.

“Shepard, you’re not driving anymore,” Garrus muttered, scowling at her.

Wrex gave a belly laugh, “We have to try that one again sometime, Shepard.” Tania grinned at him.

“Don’t egg her on,” Garrus complained with a grin.

“We, you have the honor of getting that door open,” Shepard told him. Her eyes widened when Wrex grabbed the door. He gave a roar, ripping it from its hinges. “Shit, Wrex, I know who I’m calling the next time I’m locked out of my apartment,” she chuckled.

Wrex guffawed, slapping her on the shoulder. Shepard held in her grunt from the impact. They emptied out of the Mako, taking in the damage. “Wow, we destroyed it this time,” Tania murmured. The Mako was flipped onto its side. The axle was broken, and the ball joints and suspension looked to be toast. Yep, they were looking at thousands of credits in damage after this little excursion.

She turned quickly when she heard Garrus and Kaidan firing. She grinned as two husks fell to the ground. Quickly she moved over to the AI, looking for information.

“Where are Captain Anderson and Ambassador Udina?” she asked quickly.

“Unknown,” the AI answered.

“Where is the Council?” she asked, hoping they weren’t on the Citadel.

“They are onboard the Destiny Ascension,” the AI answered. Shepard let out a relieved breath.

“Where is Saren?” she asked.

“Unknown,” the AI answered.
“Saren is in the Council chambers,” was the automated response. Shepard listened to the answer, but ignored the rest of the AI’s diatribe. She already knew Saren was a wanted man; she didn’t need to hear it.

She moved to the elevator quickly, her crew right behind her. Shepard stood silently a moment, contemplating the best way to take care of Saren. She might be able to talk him out of what he was doing, but that was highly doubtful. She knew it was going to come down to a fight between the two of them. Nihlus deserved that much, at least; as did her sister. She wouldn’t allow him to be persuaded. She was going to kill him.

Garrus moved closer to Shepard when he saw her body begin to glow. The other two backed away, watching her closely. Garrus wasn’t sure what happened to make her flare out of control, but he was determined to be there for her if she needed him.

Kaidan was shocked when he saw the blue light envelope her. It had been awhile since he saw her biotics flare out of control. Not since her operation, at least. Something must be terribly wrong for this to happen. He was going to ask, but the warning look and protective stance Garrus was showing stopped him.

Wrex growled when the elevator stopped suddenly before them. “Suit up, we’re going out,” she told them. He watched her very carefully; her voice was hollow and her body burned bright with dark energy.

They moved through the Citadel, taking out anything in their path. Shepard allowed her biotics free reign while Garrus and the others stayed well behind her, killing from a distance.

Shepard was moving through her enemies faster than usual. She was also using her biotics more than she normally would. Garrus had a feeling that she wasn’t going to hold back with this mission like she had with all those before it. Wrex and Kaidan were about to have a shock when they saw her go up against Saren. Tania had already told him that she wasn’t going to hold back, and that she would kill Saren herself for what he had done to Nihlus. That had pissed him off, but he understood; so he swallowed his anger.

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An hour later they finally made it into the Council chamber. Garrus and Wrex killed anything that moved. Kaidan moved with Tania as she went straight for Saren.

The last geth fell and the krogan and turian rushed over to their comrades. “Where is he?” Garrus asked Tania as she stood on the walkway.

“Below, preparing,” she told him coldly. “He has five seconds to show himself or I’ll force the issue.”

Garrus moved back. He knew what was going to happen when he moved to stand beside Wrex. “Do you remember when you said you wanted to be far from this?” Garrus reminded him.

“Yeah, what about it?” Wrex asked cautiously.

“Tania’s not holding back this time. She’s going to make Saren pay,” Garrus warned him.

“You have to be kidding me,” Kaidan nearly shouted. “You can’t let her do that. Garrus, you have to stop her!”

“No, I won’t. Not this time,” Garrus murmured.

Shepard slowly counted backward from five once Garrus left her side. She smiled grimly when she hit zero. She opened herself wide to her biotics, grinning as she felt the dark energy wash over her. This was the first time in a long while she allowed herself to use her biotics this freely. Usually she was careful of those around her.

She felt Saren nearby, behind a large terminal. She waited patiently as he slowly floated up; not under her power, but under the power of his hover board. “About time you showed your bare face,” she sneered. Being friends with turians had helped her to learn the proper insults to use against their race, and calling one of them a ‘bare face’ was among the worst.

“What do you know of bare faces?” he growled, his mandibles flaring in anger. Her insult obviously had the intended effect on him.

“I know they are not trustworthy; a disgrace to marked turians,” she taunted, giving him a sneering smile.
She was expecting the retaliation, hoping for it. She saw his hover board power up, and her biotics flowed over her, creating a shield. She laughed when the first shot hit her. Grinning lethally, she gathered the dark energy surrounding her and shoved it toward Saren. She watched as he was knocked off of his board and thrown through the air.

“You better not be dead, you ass, because I still have two lives to take out of your hide,” she yelled, marching toward the area in which he landed.

Garrus and the others watched as she hunted Saren. “Shouldn’t we help?” Wrex asked, a hint of uncertainty in his voice.

Garrus stood there thoughtfully for a moment. “I’m not sure,” he murmured, already moving toward his mate. Wrex watched Garrus leave, then shrugged his shoulders and followed. They stopped and gaped when they found Shepard and Saren in hand-to-hand combat. They weren’t sure who was winning, but what they were witnessing was both amazing and scary. Shepard was blue fire, her punches and kicks fast and brutal; all enhanced by her biotics.

“A hundred says Shepard uses her gun to kill him,” Wrex offered.

“No way. She’s out for blood. A hundred says she snaps his neck,” Kaidan countered.

“You are both wrong. He killed someone close to her, and she’s going to make him suffer,” Garrus told them softly. “My hundred says that she kills him slowly.” If she did do that, he didn’t want to see it. He remembered their argument on the subject. She had been stubborn, but he couldn’t see his mate being overly brutal to anyone - even Saren.

Garrus watched Saren stumble. His face was a mess, more metal than turian. One arm was bent at an awkward angle. When he moved, it was as though he couldn’t keep his balance. Garrus knew without having to check that one of Saren’s leg joints was either completely crushed or very close to it.

They all gasped when Shepard fist shot forward, the blue fire shoving its way through Saren plates into his chest. Tania’s hand disappeared into those same plates. Garrus closed his eyes; he didn’t need to see what was coming next. “Holy shit,” Kaidan whispered as he saw her hand reemerge several moments later with Saren’s still-beating heart in her palm.

Wrex was stunned for a moment before he gave a thundering laugh.

Garrus opened his eyes slowly, to find his mate kneeling next to Saren’s body. Garrus moved over to her, knowing that their job wasn’t done. Now was not the time for remorse; they had to get that chip downloaded before Sovereign took control of the Citadel.

Shepard glanced over her shoulder when she heard someone move next to her. “Tania, we need to download that chip,” he reminded her softly.

She nodded her head slowly before rising to her feet. She was still running high on dark energy, but fatigue was starting to take its toll. She fought not to lose control following the release of her immense power. She moved quickly to the console, slipping the disk into place.

“Shepard, we need communications up,” Kaidan said quickly.

Shepard rushed, opening up a channel to the station above them. “This is the Destiny Ascension. We are under attack and taking heavy fire. The Council is onboard, and our shields are almost down.” The voice was urgent and ripe with fear. Shepard hesitated; if the Council was onboard, then so was Valern.

She was about to command the fleet to help the Destiny Ascension, but a voice stopped her. “Shepard, you can’t sacrifice the fleet for us. Sovereign should be the primary objective!” Valern called, his voice coming loudly over the com.

She closed her eyes, uncertain as to what move would be correct. She sighed in relief when Garrus placed a hand on her shoulder, supporting any decision she made. What surprised her most was that no one else added their opinion. She was sure that Wrex would say something.

“Joker, do read me?” Shepard asked.

“Loud and clear. What do you want us to do? This is your show, Commander,” Joker told her, his voice carrying the smile that was on his face.

“Protect the Council. When I get the arms open, Sovereign is to become the primary target,” Shepard ordered.
“Copy that,” Joker stated.
“Shepard, are you sure about that?” Garrus asked softly.
“Yeah, I’m sure. If the Council dies, then humanity will move in and take over. I can’t let that happen. Our race isn’t ready for that. There are too many politicians that will forget about the other races and do everything to make sure that only humanity moves forward. I can’t do that. Even if that means we lose many of our people,” Shepard explained.
“Shepard, don’t waste people trying to save us. You can’t allow emotions to cloud your judgment,” Valern bit out.
“Valern, shut up. We do this my way,” she snapped before cutting off communications. She smirked as she imagined the stunned look on the Councilor’s face at this precise moment. She wished she could see it personally, but that wasn’t to be.
She stepped away from the terminal, glancing over her head as the arms to the Citadel began to open. She could barely see the ships flying around, but she could see the small explosions when one of the fleet or enemy vessels was destroyed.
“Shepard, you better get over here,” Wrex bellowed out urgently.
“What is it, Wrex?” she asked, moving quickly to his side. She couldn’t see him yet, but his voice set off warning bells. Both she and Garrus stopped dead when Saren’s body began to glow. Shepard gasped as his flesh started burning off. She didn’t know what the hell was going on, but it definitely scared her.
“I’m not taking this alone. Everyone, guns ready,” Shepard ordered as a cybernetic skeleton of Saren crawled up onto its hands and feet, springing up onto the walls. Garrus and Wrex started firing right away, while Shepard and Kaidan tried pinning or knocking it off the wall with their biotics.
Tania glanced above her at Sovereign, and she couldn’t believe her eyes. The robot that was jumping around, pissing them off was Sovereign. She grinned when Garrus took the final shot and Sovereign collapsed to the ground. Wrex walked up to it, stepping on its body and placing a few more bullets into it, just in case.
Shepard heard a sound and looked up quickly. The fleet was now concentrating all its attacks on Sovereign. “Move!” she shouted. Wrex and Kaidan ran, but Garrus hesitated. “That’s an order!” she yelled when he didn’t move. Years of ingrained training overrode his thoughts and he moved after Wrex and Kaidan.
Shepard tried to run away, but she knew that she wasn’t going to make it. The first piece of Sovereign hit her shoulder, and the second piece knocked her onto her back. The third piece just missed her head. She was now trapped, her arm pinned under a large section of the Rebel. She struggled to move, but couldn’t. She could only watch helplessly as blood poured out of her arm.
Garrus, Wrex and Kaidan were also trapped under a piece of Sovereign. They grinning at each other, thrilled that they were still alive. Garrus’ smile disappeared when his mind turned to Tania. In an instant, he was caught in a vortex of panic and fear.
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They weren’t sure how much time had passed, but they knew Garrus had to get out of their hole or he would go insane. He was now a danger to them all; the claw marks on the pieces of Sovereign that trapped them said as much. There was also a constant menacing growl coming from him.
Wrex stopped and listened. He was sure that he could hear someone moving about nearby. He was about to grab his gun, just in case, but stopped when he saw three humans standing there; attempting to free them. The humans scurried out of the way when Garrus scrambled out, almost knocking them over.
Wrex and Garrus moved through the wreckage, searching for Tania. Five humans wandered the area, searching beneath smaller pieces of debris. If they knew anything about the commander, they would be looking near the bigger pieces of wreckage. Shepard always attracted the worst of trouble. Garrus stopped as they neared a huge chunk of the fallen vessel. His mandibles flared wide as he caught his mate’s scent. They heard a moan and started to run toward it, but they needn’t have bothered. Shepard was climbing over a large piece of Sovereign, holding her bleeding arm close to her body. Garrus rushed over to his mate, pulling her into his arms; taking in her scent as she leaned
Wrex moved away from them, heading back to the humans; giving them privacy. He glanced back when he heard Tania - squeak? He wasn’t sure what to call that sound, but he never expected to hear something so weak to come from his commander. Garrus was carrying her, and Shepard looked like she was about to kill him. Wrex grinned, pleased to see that she was fine. He could just imagine the hell that Garrus was going to receive once her feet touched the ground.
Chapter 22

Tania lay on her hospital bed, staring up at a white ceiling. She wanted out now, but the doctors said no. She argued, cajoled and even tried bribing; but that all stopped when she met her new physician. He was a turian, with no bedside manner whatsoever; and he expected his every order to be followed without question. He even went so far as to tell her that if she left the bed, he would strap her down until he thought she should be released. So now she stared at the ceiling, sullenly thinking up different ways to get even with the doctor when she was free.

It had been a week since she had been saved, so to speak. In the time that she was trapped, she had lost a lot of blood. When she reached her team, she immediately passed out in her worried mate’s arms. She had been informed that she came close to losing her arm. One of her veins had collapsed, cutting off the blood supply to it. She required two different surgeries to save the appendage. The doctor’s initial thought was to remove the arm altogether, but several important citizens had stepped in and informed him that the arm would be saved. Though it was now heavily bandaged, she had seen the damage and knew she would have a nasty scar. The doctor also told her that her biotics had made the operation an ordeal, though her powers appeared to increase the rate at which she healed. Her thoughts drifted to Garrus. He was onboard the Normandy. She had ordered him to return, using the excuse that he needed to update the crew as to her condition. Her true motivation was to allow him some time away from her to rest. The update wasn’t really necessary, as the crew had been by every day to visit her. Garrus rarely left her side, and he was the one who kept her from killing her turian torturer.

“You look bored,” Pallin said, stepping into the hospital room.
She grinned. “You have no idea. Want to be a saint and spring me from this place?” she asked him hopefully.

“No, I am not going against your doctor’s orders; especially not that doctor,” he muttered.
“What makes him so special?” she asked irritably.
“That is Valern’s doctor. He’s the only one he goes to and the only one he trusts,” Pallin said pointedly. Shepard stared at him incredulously and groaned, placing one hand on her face. “I couldn’t have said it better myself,” Pallin grinned with amusement.

“Any suggestions?” she asked, peeking through her fingers; hope shining bright in her eyes.
“I’m sorry, Shepard, but I don’t have any suggestions,” Pallin said, patting her on the shoulder with sad eyes.

“Figures,” she muttered. “Where is Valern, anyway?” She was shocked that he hadn’t shown himself yet.

“He’ll be here soon, I think. The Council has been busy cleaning up and maintaining order. Now that things are calming down, I’m sure he will stop by. Why do you ask?” he asked, giving her a cautious look.

“I want to avoid him while Garrus isn’t here,” Tania answered. Pallin nodded in understanding.
“I don’t think you’ll have a choice,” he answered, giving her an odd look; one she’d never seen on a turian’s face before. Because of that, she didn’t have a clue what he was thinking. “I should leave you to get some rest.”

“You just don’t want to be here when Valern shows up,” she grinned, trying to lighten the mood. His face was dead serious when he answered. “You’re right. I don’t and neither would Garrus,” he said quietly. Tania stared at him in confusion as he turned and left. His words played over in her mind, but made no sense. She was lost and didn’t know what his parting remark meant.

She turned her attention back to the ceiling, trying to make sense of what Pallin said. She thought about getting up and leaving so she could avoid Valern, but she knew that the turian doctor would hold true to his promise and she didn’t want to be strapped down.

She came up with many different ways to dissuade Valern, but knew none of them would work. If choosing Garrus hadn’t worked, she didn’t know what would.
“You should be relaxing, not stressing about trivial things. Valern will be here soon,” a voice called from the doorway. Shepard’s head snapped toward the sound, and she relaxed when she saw it was the doctor.

“I have too many odd things happening in my life at the moment. Stressing about it is the only option I have until I can figure out an answer,” she bit out angrily. “When is Valern going to be here?”

“When he gets here,” the doctor spat angrily. “He answers to no one, not even his human whore,” the doctor growled, giving her a challenging look that she met.

“If you have such a problem with me, then why are you looking after me?” she asked coldly as her anger continued to rise. She smiled coldly as her biotics flared to life. She watched as fear flashed in his eyes momentarily; his mask quickly falling back into place.

“I was ordered by Valern to look after you. If I had a choice, I would never willingly work on a human!” he growled. He bent close to her, his mandibles flared wide; showing his sharp teeth. It was a threatening pose, one a turian would give to someone well below their station. She knew much about turian culture and did the first thing that came to mind. She backed handed him, her hands still glowing. She watched as his head snapped painfully to the side. She bared her teeth in a snarl and slowly slid from the bed, praying that her legs would hold her through what she was about to do. If they didn’t, she would look like a fool and lose any respect she was about to gain with this turian. However, if they held her up, she would show this turian his place with her. She may not be a turian, but she had turian friends in high places and she was mated with a turian. She was not about to let this doctor challenge her and get away with it.

The turian doctor looked at her in shock, but she didn’t care. She was going to make her point loud and clear. Her feet hit the cold floor, but she didn’t flinch. She was secretly thrilled that they didn’t buckle beneath her. Quickly she snapped out her foot, hitting him in the lower leg joint. He collapsed, catching himself before he landed on the ground. He went to swing a clawed hand at her and she noticed that his talons were filed down. She grabbed his arm, empowered by her biotics and hissed her disgust at his claws. One hand shot out and grabbed his fringe, yanking his head back roughly until his eyes met hers. She bent down until their faces were almost touching. “If you ever disrespect me again, I’ll kill you,” she said, her voice filled with hate. She let him go slowly when she saw him nod his head. Without warning, she shot a small biotic surge into him. “That is so you remember,” she smirked.

He met her eyes for a moment and then bowed his head respectfully. That is what she had been waiting for. He accepted that she was an equal. “We understand each other?” she asked icily.

“He had better,” a cold voice said from behind the doctor.

“I understand and agree with Valern,” the doctor answered with a grin. The ass had challenged her to see if whatever the hell Valern said to him was true, she thought angrily. “You know turian culture very well,” he nodded, rising to his feet. She looked at him, shaking her head slowly as he exited the room.

She was about to say something to Valern, but he stopped her when he lifted her back onto the bed. Her words turned into a cold glare. “I have a mate, remember,” she warned him, ignoring the flutter in her stomach when he touched her.

“I am very aware of that,” he answered quietly, meeting her eyes; showing her the regret that lingered in them.

“You may be aware of it, but you are not acting like it. You’ve been acting like you are my mate,” she told him tiredly. She couldn’t stay angry with him even though she knew she should.

She gasped when his eyes met hers. She didn’t say another word - she couldn’t. Valern’s emotions were there to see. He loved her and he was showing it to her. She didn’t know what to say. She didn’t want to hurt him. She closed her eyes, shaking her head in confusion. She didn’t understand how this had happened. “Why put yourself through this, Valern? You know I have a mate,” she whispered. If she hadn’t met Garrus, she might have accepted his affection. However, she wouldn’t leave Garrus for Valern, no matter how fond she was of the Councilor.

“I don’t know,” he answered just as quietly. Hesitantly he reached out, tracing her cheek with a talon. She should chase him away, she knew this, but she couldn’t. She knew what was coming
next; she could see it in his eyes. So she’d allow him to have this one moment as ‘goodbye’.
Her eyes never left his when he bent down, placing his forehead against hers. She still didn’t know
what that meant, but she wasn’t going to question it at this moment. She closed her eyes as he tilted
her head off to the side and nipped her neck gently, without breaking the skin. “Goodbye, Shepard,”
he whispered against her skin, taking in her scent before straightening to his full height. “I think it’s
best that any contact between us should be through holo or Council meetings from now on.” He
closed his eyes and bowed his head, his voice raw as he continued. “I can’t trust myself and I have
no desire to get killed by your mate… I want too much…”
She met his penetrating gaze and acknowledged each emotion he showed her with a heavy heart.
She watched love, desire, regret, and finally a sadness that went soul deep enter his eyes. Neither
said a word as their eyes met. He bowed his head to her in respect, his gaze never leaving hers. His
eyes were filled with tenderness as he looked away, turning from her to leave the room. The
atmosphere changed instantly when they heard a growl from the doorway. Garrus stood there,
 glaring at Valern hatefully. His gloves were off and laying on the floor, his sharp talons at the ready
as he moved fluidly into the room. Tania knew Garrus was beyond pissed and prayed he would
retain control.
Valern closed his eyes for a moment when he saw Garrus. He had every right to be pissed and knew
he needed to move quickly if he hoped to resolve the situation peacefully. He moved over to
Shepard’s mate with a certainty he didn’t feel. For the first time in his life he knew the meaning of
true fear.
He motioned for Garrus to move outside, closing the door behind them.
Garrus scowled at the turian in front of him, ready to kill him in the most gruesome way possible. He
was about to attack, but hesitated as Valern spoke softly. “You entered the room as I was saying
goodbye to your mate and she was allowing me that one privilege. She’s yours. I will not step in the
way; but know this - harm her and nothing, not even Tania, will stop me from killing you. I will
always be there protecting her and watching over her, whether you like it or not,” Valern bit out
coldly, his claws at the ready if Garrus attacked.
“Stay the hell away from her,” Garrus warned, his mandibles flaring out challengingly.
“Stay away from her? That is not possible and you know it. She’s a Spectre,” Valern stated.
“However, I will keep our relationship professional, unless she needs me.”
Garrus was going to say more, but stopped when Valern’s eyes met his own; showing Garrus
something he never thought he would see. He suddenly felt sorry for Valern. He loved Tania and
was willing to give her up so she could be happy. There was nothing he could say; the only thing he
could do was keep silent. Slowly he nodded in understanding and watched as the Turian Councilor
walked away. His shoulders were hunched, and his stride missing the confidence everyone was used
to seeing from him.
With a relieved smile he walked into the room; once more returning to his mate – where he belonged.
~oooooooooooo~
Shepard grinned broadly when the turian doctor finally told her she could leave the hospital. Garrus
stood by her side as she left the building. He was worried how she would take the devastation that
she was about to see.
Shepard stepped out of the building and gasped. All around her were ruined buildings and people
sitting on the ground, crying from loss of property or loved ones. Blood smeared the walkways,
reminders of those who had died. The air was thick with grief, fear, and loss. One ship had done all
this. She couldn’t believe it. The Citadel was in ruins. The damage could be repaired, but would its
citizen’s spirits?
“My god, Garrus, what will happen when the Reapers do finally come; if only one ship did this?”
she asked quietly. Did they stand a chance? Was there hope or was she fighting in vain? she thought
sorrowfully. No, she couldn’t believe that! There was always hope – millions of lives counted on
that.
“We’ll be prepared. The Council and Valern will make sure of it. Even Pallin will step in. The
turians will be there backing you,” Garrus answered as he took in the destruction.
They slowed as they passed some C-Sec workers. Shepard gaped as they stopped what they were doing and saluted her. She hesitated when she saw a turian break away from the crowd and head their way. “Shepard, it’s good to see that you’re back on your feet,” Chellick told her.
“It’s good to be back on my feet,” she murmured with a grin. “What was that all about?” she asked, motioning to the people that had saluted her.
“They are showing their appreciation and respect. You’re the one who saved the Citadel,” Chellick said and laughed as Shepard groaned.
“Ah, man. This better not happen every time I step onto the Citadel,” she complained.
“If it should happen to anyone, it should be you, Shepard,” Chellick stated quietly. He turned his focus to Garrus. He stood at her side protectively, not hiding the fact that he thought of a human as his mate. “Look after her, Garrus. You’ve picked a worthy mate,” he said and placed a clenched hand on his chest; lowering his head momentarily in respect.
They continued to the Normandy. Shepard was astounded at how many people stood at attention and saluted when she past them. She hated to admit it, but the respect she was shown brought a lump to her throat.
Her eyes lit up as her ship came into sight. She picked up her pace. She wanted desperately to be onboard her ship, where she belonged. The couple waited in decontamination quietly; there was no need for words.
Her eyes widened when she stepped onto the CIC deck. “All hands at attention. Commanding Officer on board!” Pressley ordered. Everyone that had been aboard the Normandy from the beginning stood at attention, even her ground team. Wrex had his fist clenched against his chest, a look of respect in his eyes. Tali had her head bowed low toward her, and Liara bowed respectfully. Kaidan stood at attention with respect shining in his eyes. Even Joker was on his feet, standing at attention. She glanced at Garrus. He was also saluting her, and she could see love and deep respect in his eyes.
She was speechless. She didn’t know what to say to them, but she knew she had to say something. “You honor me, but this was a team effort. I couldn’t have done it without all of you,” she stated and then she saluted them. Grins broke free; some laughed, and others clasped her on the shoulder as she passed them. She made her way slowly to her cabin with Garrus beside her. She could clearly see the hungry glint in his eyes.

~oooooooooooo~

Garrus watched his mate, his mandibles flared out in pride as he realized that Shepard was finally his. He didn’t need to worry about Valern or any other turian. Slowly he made his way to his mate, wrapping his arms around her and pulling her close. He thought of the shock on her face at the respect she had received since leaving the hospital. He knew she had been confused when Chellick bowed to her; showing her the honor that only well respected turians would normally receive. He stood proudly beside her, pleased that she was finally getting the recognition that she had deserved for so long.
He looked down at her a face; still as alien as ever, but beautiful to him. She looked up at him with calm, loving eyes. She would never look at him with adoration; that just wasn’t her way. But the look in her eyes at that moment was perfect. He led her over to the bed, forcing her to take a seat on it.
He was suddenly stricken with nerves; he wasn’t sure if he would be able to give this moment all that it needed. The jeweler told him that he would have to go down on one knee, but for a turian that is a submissive move. He wanted them to be equals. Though he would become the submissive if it would make her happy.
He went to bend down onto one knee, and relief swept through him when she stopped him. “Garrus, if you are about to do what I think you are, you’d better not go down on one knee. Either do it as an equal to me, mate, or don’t do it at all,” she snapped, her eyes blazing with insult. What relief he felt burned away under that look and his nerves came rushing back.
“Tania, I don’t know how to do this. As far as I am concerned we are married. But you’re human, so...” he trailed off, not sure how to explain his feelings to her.
“Garrus, I never asked for this. I know we are married,” she stated firmly. Garrus almost growled; this was getting frustrating and she wasn’t helping. He didn’t want this to be wrong for her. He wanted her to remember this moment as other humans would, and the way he remembered the moment when she accepted him as her mate. It had been a moment he would remember forever. She had accepted all of him, even when he lost control and wasn’t gentle with her. He thought about it more and realization suddenly dawned on him. This was his mate; she wouldn’t want him to be gentle, as a human would be. She enjoyed everything he did. She wanted an equal and Shepard wasn’t one for sweet words and romantic poems. She was a soldier, just as he was.

“So, are you finally going to take me as your husband?” he asked a cocky gleam in his eyes. He grinned broadly as her laughter filled the room and she jumped up, wrapping her long legs around his waist.

“Yes, I’ll take you as my husband, mate,” she murmured, before going for his neck where she bit until she broke skin.

He moaned, feeling her teeth sink into his skin; but he knew they couldn’t start anything at this moment. He wanted to be married quickly and if they started now, he wouldn’t be leaving this room for a while. “When do you want to have the ceremony?” he asked, his voice deep. It approached a growl as he fought against taking her.

“Garrus, this isn’t the time for talk. In the morning we can iron out the details. Now I have plans for you,” she muttered and then proceeded to suck on one of his mandibles as her hands hit every sensitive spot beneath his fringe. He moaned low in his throat, holding her tightly to him.

It took a few moments for him to regain control of his body, even though his mate wasn’t helping much. “Sorry, Tania, but now is the time for talking. Once I get you into bed, we aren’t leaving for a while,” he whispered heatedly against the warm flesh of her shoulder.

Tania met his eyes and sighed. She jumped down and took a seat on the bed, waiting for Garrus to continue. “When did you want the ceremony?” he asked.

“The sooner the better,” she grinned.

“Four days long enough?” he asked with a raised brow ridge.

“Garrus, that is not possible,” she smirked. She remembered some of her friends bitching and complaining at how long it took to plan a wedding.

“Actually, it is possible. I already have the crew working on it,” he smirked. The next name wiped the smirk off his face. “Valern is helping to move things faster. We won’t be able to be married on the Citadel because of all the damage, but we can have the ceremony on the ship and the party afterwards.”

“There will be no partying on the ship,” she warned him, using her ‘commander’s’ voice.

“Thought you would say that. Kaidan and Wrex suggested that we set up the party outside,” Garrus told her, chuckling as she gaped at him. “What do you think I was doing while you were in the hospital?” he asked, pleased that he had finally made her speechless.

“What would I do without you?” she said and grinned. He had taken care of everything. If she had been in charge, she was sure that she would have forgotten almost everything. She was an excellent Commander. She could strategize plans of attack, get groups of people to listen to her, and fight off waves of enemies. But put her in charge of something as basic as a wedding or anything of that nature and she was lost.

She stood up, rising onto her tip toes and nuzzling his cheek with hers, taking a deep breath as if taking in his scent. She would never be able to take in the base scent as a turian would, but for her mate she did the best she could. Garrus’ arms surrounded her as he purred his pleasure. He nuzzled her neck where his bite mark remained; his tongue tasting the wound, taking in her scent mingled with his own.

He held her close to him, enjoying her nearness. He couldn’t wait until after they were married, when he could once again be with her. He hadn’t planned to take her so soon, but his mate was quickly changing his mind as her hand drifted to the latches of his armor. With nimble fingers she undressed him, silencing his protests with her mouth. Garrus groaned, helping her out her clothes as
the last of his fell to the ground. He gently took her, reigning in his nature. He wanted to show her how much he loved her with the tenderness she deserved. He growled as she tried to roughen things up a bit, but he held back. Working his way down her body with light nips and long strokes of his tongue, he watched as she surrendered to him. This time was for her; he brought her to her completion with his tongue and claws before moving back up her sated body. Slowly he entered her, groaning as she surrounded him. Home, she was where he belonged now, he thought as he buried himself deep within her. The first time they had been together he had been on top, but he had been uncertain of how to proceed. This time was different; even though they never tried this position again, he was more confident with himself and their relationship. He moved slowly within her, reveling in every sound he brought from her. He listened as she groaned his name when she peaked. Hearing her call his name brought him to his own release. He started to roll off to the side, but she held him tightly; not allowing him to move.

“I love you,” she whispered against the side of his cheek. Warmth spread through him, igniting his desire once again. This time he allowed himself to follow his instincts as he took her again.

~ooooooooooo~

Wrex and Shepard moved toward her apartment. She need Wrex’s help in case she had to move anything large. “So what are we doing here?” he asked.

“We are collecting a necklace from my culture that I will be giving to Garrus on our wedding night,” she answered.

“You sure it’s still there?” he asked.

“Nope. After all the ransacking it might not be there. For all I know my apartment could be bare,” she muttered, scowling at the krogan.

“It looks like someone put guards on your door,” Wrex smirked as he nodded toward the two men standing outside of her apartment door.

“Who the hell would do that?” she muttered quietly.

“Your other mate?” Wrex said and gave her a knowing look before she could snap at him.

“He’s not my…”

“Tell him that,” Wrex retorted. “Or better yet, let me tell him.”

“No, you are not killing a Councilor,” she stated heatedly. She watched as Wrex shrugged his massive shoulders and walked into her apartment. She was shocked to see all the damage that had been done. Part of Sovereign lay on her living room floor. It wasn’t a big piece, but it still left her kitchen and living room in ruins.

“Where was this necklace before?” Wrex asked.

“In that corner,” she said and pointed toward a large pile of rubble. There was no way they could get it now. It was hopeless.

“Shepard, move back. I don’t want you injured again. I won’t miss watching you get shackled to that turian because you are in the hospital….again!” Wrex stated with a grin. Shepard moved back, unsure what he was planning. Her eyes widened as Wrex started picking up large pieces of debris and tossing them out of the way with ease. She took a few more steps back when a piece as large as her own body flew past her.

Wrex spotted a box with odd designs on it and wondered if this was what Shepard was looking for. He picked it up carefully. He was impressed with the craftsmanship. The box was obviously handmade. “Shepard, is this it?” he asked gruffly, hiding his emotions.

“Yeah, that’s it,” she grinned, taking the box from his hands. “You know, Wrex, there are many different cultures among humans. I come from a group called ‘natives’. Most haven’t followed the old ways for the longest time, but I was raised to follow it by my grandmother. Anyway, to make a long story short, this is part of my culture; and that is why it means so much to me,” she explained as she passed him a beaded leather strap that warrior’s used to wear long ago. The beads depicted the story of a brave warrior on a great hunt. She smiled softly at the beads and looked at Wrex. “I want you to have this,” she murmured.

“What is it?” he asked gruffly.
“Long ago, when humans moved around on horseback, great warriors would have these in their hair. The leather would be different, depending on how great the warrior was. Not just anyone could wear it; only the greatest of us could,” she told him. She didn’t know how many times this krogan had saved her life; put himself in danger so she could finish her mission.

Wrex didn’t say a word. He knew this meant a lot to her and he didn’t think he was worthy of it, but he wasn’t going to hurt her. All he needed was to see Shepard cry. That was the last thing he wanted to see. She was a warrior, just like him.

They left her apartment. Wrex walked beside her with the beaded leather gripped in his hand. He glanced at the two young turians that were guarding her door. She smirked as he grinned at them, showing them his pointed teeth. He chuckled as they quickly stepped away from him.

She turned to the two turians. “Who sent you to guard this place?” she asked them.

The younger one answered first. “The Turian Councilor sent me to guard your door, Commander Shepard,” he answered, standing at his full height proudly.

“I was sent by Executor Pallin,” the other turian added. “We have both been told to stay here until we are relieved,” he explained, looking at her uncertainly.

Shepard eyes widened for a moment. Both Pallin and Valern did this - she couldn’t believe it.

Shepard smirked. “When you speak to them again, tell them I said ‘thank you’,” she murmured and walked away with Wrex following her.

“How many turians do you have sniffing around you?” Wrex chuckled, slapping Shepard on the shoulder good naturedly.

They were almost to the Normandy when they were stopped again, much to Wrex’s amusement.

“Shepard, how are the young ones doing at guarding your door?” Chellick asked.

“Fine, I was just talking to them. Why?” she asked curiously.

“I was going to talk to you about that later, but now seems to be as good a time as any. They need experience and I was hoping you could pick them up and put them through the works in a month or so,” Chellick told her.

“Wouldn’t they be better off aboard a turian ship?” she asked curiously.

“No turian ship sees as much action as you do,” he grinned. “Will you at least think about it? Executor Pallin thinks it a good idea and he mentioned that the Turian Councilor might agree.”

“I’ll think about it. That is the most you are getting right now,” she grumbled good-naturedly as she walked away from him. She glanced at Wrex, seeing his shit-eating grin. “Don’t say a word,” she hissed.

“So tell me, Shepard, what do turians have that your kind doesn’t?” he asked, looking at her curiously.

“Sharp teeth and claws,” she grinned unrepentantly.

Wrex gave a booming laugh. People turned to look at the duo strangely. It wasn’t often that a krogan laughed, unless he was covered in blood.

~ooo~

Shepard couldn’t keep the grin off of her face as she walked around the ship. Tomorrow she was getting married. She still needed to give Garrus the necklace. She hadn’t had a chance yet. They had both been so busy. She couldn’t wait for her wedding. They were going to follow turian culture mostly, with some human traditions added into the mix.

There wasn’t going to be that many people there, thankfully. They made up the list themselves. It was to be held on the Normandy because they didn’t want to wait. The Citadel wasn’t in any shape to hold a wedding, so they agreed to have it onboard.

She hadn’t been planning on telling anyone other than her closest friends, but that changed when Valern took great pleasure in telling Udina, with Councilor Anderson standing beside him. He later sent her a video of what happened. She’d watched it a few dozen times now, taking great delight in Udina’s reaction - the horror on his face, and the fear because he couldn’t say a word; since it was the Turian Councilor giving him the message. She later found out that the video had been sent to Pallin and Chellick as notification. That led to a lot of messages.

The first was from Chellick. It wasn’t too bad, but he still wasn’t impressed that she was marrying
Garrus. There was still a feud there; Chellick hadn’t forgotten his altercation with her future husband. Pallin wasn’t surprised at all. His only comment was that it was ‘about time’. Now she had the option of taking him as her ambassador instead of dealing with Udina, as she was marrying a turian. The decision was simple and she chose Pallin without hesitation.

She was pulled from her thoughts by a small cough behind her. “Are you anxious for your wedding?” Tali asked. They were relaxing in the Mess Hall, along with the rest of the crew. Everyone had shore leave, but most decided to stay onboard. Shepard had been given a video of a party that was held while she was in the hospital. She had tears in her eyes as she watched the toasts that were made in her honor.

“Yeah, actually I am,” Tania grinned at Tali.

“So is Garrus. He won’t stop pacing,” Tali chuckled. “Wrex already threatened him, so now he’s working on the Mako with the parts that the Council sent.”

Shepard chuckled. “Well, at least he has something to occupy his mind,” she answered. “At the moment I have nothing to occupy my mind, since every female on this ship has basically taken over the wedding planning,” she scowled.

“If you want we can…” Tali started.

“No! I am so not getting involved with that,” Shepard answered with a horrified look. It was bad enough they were getting her into a fucking dress. She didn’t want to give them a chance to do more. She heard snickering and watched as Tali began laughing, holding her sides. She glanced at Liara, who was also giggling as she took a seat with them. Her eyes snapped to Kaidan as he joined them, a grin on his face. Her eyes narrowed when she watched Joker limp his way toward them. He had a Cheshire grin on his face. “Joker, what do you have planned?” she asked as butterflies filled her stomach.

“Nothing,” he answered, a bit too innocently.

“If this ‘nothing’ happens to become public…” she trailed off, her eyes saying exactly what she wouldn’t say out loud.

“Don’t worry, it won’t be public,” he snickered. She shook her head; she honestly didn’t want to know what he was planning.

“Uh-huh,” she said and gave him a disbelieving look. Joker didn’t bother trying to wipe the grin off of his face. He had made Shepard believe he was about to do something evil, exactly as he wanted. The reality was quite the opposite.

He drowned out Tali’s chatter, until something caught his attention. “Did you know that drell is on the Citadel?” she asked Shepard.

Shepard raised a brow at Tali, wondering why she brought it up. “I just thought that when we leave, you might want him on the team,” she commented with a shrug.

“No, not this time. He’s an assassin, and I don’t think he’d want to work with a group,” she answered. She could help but wonder what he was doing on the Citadel, however. She couldn’t see it being a hit. The Citadel was in chaos and she didn’t think he would take advantage of that. He didn’t strike her as the cold-blooded killer type.

~oooooooooo~

Shepard got tired of waiting for Garrus in her room, so she went hunting for him. She found Wrex in the Mess Hall eating, but Garrus wasn’t with him. “Where is Garrus?” she asked him.

“Down by the Mako,” he answered with a smirk. “I’ll be up here for a while, and Tali is off the ship for a bit,” he grinned lecherously. She grinned, a blush tingling her cheeks as she beat a hasty retreat.

She found Garrus under the Mako, his feet sticking out as he cursed. She grinned, remembering another time she found him in this position. At that time she had felt for him, but there was no release for those emotions. Now he was hers.

She crouched down by his legs and unsnapped the buckles at the bottom of his armor. She heard him bang his head and curse again. She caressed the skin she had revealed, reveling in his groan. “Tania, this isn’t fair,” he muttered, his voice already deepening.

“All is fair in love and war,” she grinned as her fingers deftly undid more clasps, loosening the bottom of his armor.
“Tania, at least let me get out from underneath here,” he grumbled, trying to slide out from under the Mako. Tania chuckled and allowed him to slide out from the Mako. She gasped when his heated gaze met her own. She didn’t have time to react before he pulled her to him, forcing her to straddle him. “As you said, all is fair in love and war,” he murmured before nipping her neck.

Garrus grinned as she moaned against him. He rose to his feet with her legs wrapped around his waist. With a smooth motioned he opened the doors to the Mako and slid them both inside, closing the door behind them.

Wrex sat in the Mess Hall, keeping watch in case someone started to go down to the garage. He would stop them to give Shepard some privacy. His rose to his feet as Alenko slipped into the elevator. He hadn’t noticed the human right away, as he had been deep in thought.

Quickly he followed Alenko down to the garage, sighing in relief when the room appeared empty. Wrex shrugged his shoulders, thinking that Garrus and Shepard had slipped past without him noticing and headed for her room. He took a seat on his usual crate, planning what he was going to do next now that Saren was dead. There was no need for him to stick around and Shepard knew he was leaving. He had already told her of his plans, but he wasn’t sure when he would actually exit the ship.

Out of the corner of his eye, he watched Alenko work on his gun. Wrex smirked as he watched the human fumble along. He had been about to say something, but his attention snapped to the Mako when it started moving forward; straight into the wall. It wasn’t going fast enough to cause damage, but the fact that it moved at all was surprising. He raised a brow ridge, watching the vehicle closely; curious to see if it would move again.

Kaidan jumped when the Mako moved. He didn’t know what caused it, but he needed to tell Garrus about it later. He was about to turn back to his work when the vehicle backed up, hitting some crates. He moved quickly toward it and stopped when Wrex spoke. “I wouldn’t do that if I were you,” Wrex warned him, a huge grin on his face.

Wrex leaned back on his crate, holding in his laughter. He had figured out what was happening when he heard Garrus’ growl and Shepard’s moan. He was surprised that Alenko didn’t hear anything. He thought about letting Alenko discover it on his own, but decided the couple might not find it as funny as he did.

He chuckled when the doors to the Mako opened, showing a disheveled Shepard and a grinning Garrus. Alenko looked like he had just swallowed his tongue as he watched them walk away. Wrex smirked as he saw the necklace that Garrus was wearing.

~ooooooooooo~

The wedding was short, and Shepard had to admit that the girls on the ship had worked very hard on setting everything up. She couldn’t believe it! She was now Commander Tania Shepard-Vakarian. It was odd to say and to hear, but she didn’t mind it in the least.

Arrangements were made to hold the reception on the Presidium, the only area of that level that hadn’t been destroyed by Sovereign. She was on her fifth cup of some mysterious drink. She wasn’t even going to ask what it was. The alcohol was making her giddy and everyone was enjoying it. She grinned as she watched everyone having fun, dancing to the music that played all around them.

There hadn’t been many people at the wedding, but now it seemed that everyone from the Citadel was here. She didn’t mind as long as everyone was having fun. People both she and Garrus knew were handling security, making sure no one caused problems.

She was in heaven; she couldn’t have asked for a better day. Her apartment was being rebuilt, thanks to her ground team. They had all chipped in to rebuild it as her wedding present. Pallin had presented her with official documents that made him her new ambassador, with Valern’s signature at the bottom. Valern’s present was a necklace that Garrus agreed she should wear. It shocked her that Garrus was agreeing with anything that came from the Councilor. It wasn’t the type of necklace that she was used to; this one was made from some type of dark rawhide. It was decorated with white stitching, and a small pendant with blue markings hung from its center. She knew it had meaning, but she wasn’t sure of the specifics. She planned on asking Garrus once they were back on board the Normandy; when they would exchange the gifts they had gotten one another.
She laughed as her husband was dragged onto the dance floor by Tali and Liara. He didn’t fight them; he wouldn’t have a chance and he knew it. She smirked as Kaidan dragged her onto the dance floor. It wasn’t a slow song, so the lieutenant didn’t have to worry about Garrus.

After the song she went to an empty chair, taking a seat next to Pallin. He and Valern were both drinking profusely and neither noticed her at their side.

~oooooooo~

In a dark corner, debris surrounding him, a pair of onyx eyes watched the festivities. The ship he had been on joined the fighting after Shepard had ordered them to protect the Destiny Ascension. Krios had been on his way to his next contract. He was supposed to meet his contact on Noveria, but now he would be late. Ships weren’t allowed to leave the Citadel yet, and he wasn’t sure when he would be able to continue with his mission.

He turned his focus back to the party and noticed Shepard and Garrus. They seemed to be the center of the celebration. His eyes widened as he heard the first toast. The commander and her turian were now married.

Years of training and honed skills told him this was a very important moment and that he needed to remember ever detail. He was never one to ignore his feelings, and so he watched intently; memorizing everything around him. Though he wasn’t sure why, he knew that someday he would need this information.

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