

Chapter One

Ja’Rol slammed open Slone’s mahogany double doors. “Traci just quit!” His entrance didn’t seem to register with the man behind the desk. “I said—”

“I heard you.” Slone typed without pause. “Please shut the doors. Now everyone three floors above and below knows our situation.”

Ja’Rol harrumphed but did as his business partner, best friend, and lover asked. With the doors closed and locked behind him, he cleared the ocean of space to reach the desk. Large tinted windows delivered a breathtaking view of the city view behind Slone, if he even knew it was there. The man worked like a dog once he was inside these offices.

Plush with leather, wood, and thick carpet, the room was filled with every modern convenience from a large screen TV to an espresso machine. There were the prerequisite chairs and a side lounge for the longer afternoons into nights. Essentially an office with real muscle. Slone worked tireless hours on keeping Tube-Nautics running flawlessly. And when he couldn’t, Ja’Rol picked up the slack and filled in the gaps.

Walking to the coffee maker—a regular counter-sized one—he filled a mug and dumped a three-count of hazelnut creamer into it. After a stir and a sip, he declared it perfect and turned.

“What are we going to do about Traci?”

“I imagine find a replacement,” Slone replied, still distracted by his computer.

Frustrated at being ignored, Ja’Rol played dirty to get his lover’s attention. Envisioning them both naked, he knelt in front of Slone, toying with his massive cock between teasing lips. He almost purred himself as the image filled his vision.

Slone snapped up and glared. “Ja’Rol!”

“Yes?” he answered in all innocence. Slone’s color rose as the image took on an active life. Leaning on a nearby bookcase, Ja’Rol crossed his ankles to enjoy his coffee. And Slone’s reactions. His lashes lowered, unobtrusively relishing the effect he had on Slone. “Something the matter?”

Just as Ja’Rol’s imagination took Slone’s heavy length into his mouth, Slone growled a needy groan.

“Do I have your attention now?” he asked as disinterested as possible, though his own body was beginning to throb with the want he’d dared to stir.

“Shit,” Slone hissed. Sitting in his chair, he slouched back, adjusting the pulsing ridge in his slacks. “See what you did?”

Discovering the adamant need Ja’Rol licked his lips, tasting the coffee, but wanting to taste something else entirely. Letting out a repentant sigh, he said, “I’m sorry. Shouldn’t have done that. But damn, man. Pay attention sometimes. This is serious. *Traci left.*”

“Where did she go?”

Finally, interest. “She is moving with her fiancé halfway across the state. Nothing I said kept her here.”

“Are you worried she’ll talk?”

Ja'Rol waved a hand. "No, she's not like that. The non-disclosure was practically a formality with her. No telling whose other secrets she carries from around here." Glancing toward Slone, he added, "She knew about us."

"Being gay?"

"Being wyvern."

Slone blinked and froze. "How?" Ice could have formed on the glass behind where he sat, the air chilled so quickly.

"She saw us return to the penthouse after flying. She's rarely in that early in the morning, but she'd said she couldn't sleep and knew it was something here keeping her up. So she came in early. Very early. She said that it just didn't matter. We were good bosses, excellent employers, and she'd sell her mother to stay, but she wouldn't sell her fiancé."

"How long has she known?" Slone's voice had gone deathly calm, weighing the need to keep their identity secret.

"Let me see," he mused. "Almost five years now." Though neither man looked a day over thirty, five years to them was barely more than a blink of an eye in time. Tube-Nautics was actually their fifth enterprise together.

"And you never thought to tell me?" Slone roared, slapping his desk.

Ja'Rol shook his head. "No, she told me how long she's known when she gave her resignation about an hour ago." He sipped his coffee. "Honestly, she's not some young thing looking to exploit us. She's a fifty year old divorcé who has a second chance to live again. She wasn't going to let the fact that two wyverns are her bosses screw that up."

Slone glowered at him, and Ja'Rol had the urge to clear his throat. "We talked a lot."

"Obviously," Slone responded with a droll tone and a glare. "Anything else you haven't told me? Anything else you two talked about that will give me heart failure?"

Ja'Rol hid his grin behind his cup. When Slone started sassing, Ja'Rol knew it would be all right. There had been some concern telling Slone someone knew their secret, but after talking to Traci, after being *floored* that she'd known for so long and never blinked an eye or changed her work habits or treated them any differently, he knew it would be okay in the end.

Then he frowned. "But how are we going to replace her? And with who?"

"Run an ad?"

For some reason, Ja'Rol wasn't keen on that. Who knew what kind of nuts would try to get into one of the city's largest, and most acclaimed aeronautical engineering and design corporations to discover internal secrets? The world's leaders might be smiling when they talk in the same room, but they still passed notes like kids in school. The last thing either man wanted was one of their prototype testers being bastardized into some new war machine.

"What about someone in-house?"

Ja'Rol finished his coffee, catching the last of the hot, sweetened brew. He wanted another, but he'd already had two for the morning, one more than his usual limit. Caffeine made him horny. He could control it, but if he wasn't careful, Slone would be

flat on his back. Probably why he'd been so quick to tease the other man with a visual blowjob.

With a sigh, he set the mug down and walked away.

"You could always switch to decaffeinated," Slone offered knowingly, an understanding glint in his gaze. His eyes were extraordinary. One, a solid light pale green, the other a peridot-sapphire blend that blew Ja'Rol's mind.

Ja'Rol smiled. Now that he'd poked into his head, Slone was probably sitting in his thoughts. "I'll live. Besides, I like the rush. I know what it'll do."

"You're a caffeine druggie," Slone accused with a tenor laugh.

He only shrugged not bothering to deny it, then sat in one of the thick padded leather chairs in front of his desk. "So, Traci."

"Let's take a look and see who we can move to a senior administrator. If there isn't anyone, we'll have to look outside."

Ja'Rol steepled his fingers. He wasn't crazy about the idea, but realistically, what other choices did they have?

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Ja'Rol opened the office door, searching the waiting area. "Ms. Blythe?"

A senior citizen with the glare of a drill sergeant stood. Ja'Rol hid his disappointment. A company of almost seven hundred and this was the best they could do?

Forty-five minutes later, Ms. Blythe was allowed to return to her department. Ja'Rol sagged in his seat. Enclosed again in the office, it was all he could do to not ball the pad and list and throw it all away. "Six interviews and not one will do."

"What is it you're looking for?" Slone asked, regarding him from behind his desk. "At least two were over-qualified, and even Ms. Blythe would have run our floor like a ship."

Ja'Rol rolled his head side to side on the black leather of the chair, staring at the ceiling. "I'll know when I see her," was the best he could reply. He wasn't sure either, really. He just knew he didn't want Methuselah's grandmother manning the floor.

"You're sure it's a her?" he mused.

"Huh?"

"You keep saying 'her', like it's a foregone conclusion." Slone rose and strode to the chair Ja'Rol occupied. He had a stalking stride, fluid and graceful, with a definite commanding presence. Combined with thick black hair, incredible eyes and a mouth that knew pleasure and control, he simply looked delicious in black trousers and a suit jacket. "You've been very absorbed in this." Slone's deft fingers dug into tight shoulders. A rare on the job display for either man.

Ja'Rol blinked, melting under Slone's talented hands. "I guess it is a chauvinistic reaction, but not one applicant has been male."

Lowering to whisper, Slone breathed into his ear. "Is it something more?" he asked.

Lifting his eyes to the man hovering over him, Ja'Rol understood. His heart beat with a quickened rhythm, hoping. "You feel it too, don't you?"

"Incomplete?" Slone asked with a faint nod, still intimate between them. He sank into a crouch next to the chair. "I have, for months. I wasn't sure if I was imagining it, or not. Then a few weeks ago, I began to feel it in you. My biggest worry was I was transposing my own hungers and wants onto you."

Ja'Rol lifted a hand, a thumb smoothing the faint crease showing over a single eyebrow. "You're not. I don't know when I realized it, to be honest. I love you." Tipping, Slone accepted the soft kiss to his chin, meeting him to warm them both, lip to lip.

A low groan emanated from Slone. "Can't." He pulled away regretfully. With a sigh, he sank into the chair's twin. "This is why you've been like a lion with a splinter in his paw. You knew why you were looking, and knew the one we need wasn't already here."

Ja'Rol nodded. What was the point in arguing? Somewhere in his gut, he did know. There was immense relief, also, that Ja'Rol wasn't alone in this predicament. The last thing he wanted was to hurt Slone. Bringing in a third, especially a woman that he couldn't help desiring, a woman that neither knew... He'd spent more than one night fighting with himself over whether to ignore the desire, or try to find a way to explain it to his lover. They'd been together for decades. The slow build up of this incompleteness had confused him, but now that he understood what it meant, he just needed to find a way to fill it.

"I didn't want to ruin what we share, either. I'm happy, but there is something missing. I think being able to talk to Traci, having a female in constant close proximity, helped me to ignore the chasm, but I can't, not any longer." He felt a faint blush hit his cheeks, unable to meet the other man's eyes. "I can't stop looking at Jericka's breasts. But I'm hesitant to throw the doors open. I'm no good at screening applicants."

"Not exactly. You already knew she wasn't here. And in truth, we're looking for two women. One who will work with us—"

"And one who will love us," Ja'Rol finished thoughtfully. "Would it work if she were one and the same?"

Slone slouched in his chair as well, both stretched and boneless with gazes upward. "It's possible, but what we need is a goddess who is also a drill sergeant of Ms. Blythe's caliber. We both need the organization."

"And someone to keep the riff-raff off our floor." Ja'Rol grinned.

"Mother adores you."

Ja'Rol chuckled. Couldn't squeeze anything past Slone.

"So, place an ad?" Ja'Rol rolled his tongue, abhorrence in the idea making his mouth dry.

"It's really the only way. Hopefully, our goddess answers it. I don't know how much longer I can take you being so sullen."

"Sullen?" Ja'Rol snorted. "*Just wait until tonight, handsome.*"

"*Believe me, I am.*" Slone winked at him then pushed out of the chair to get back to work. A moment later, Ja'Rol left to discuss the ad with human resources, sending a quick prayer that they found what they needed, and the one they both craved.

Chapter Two

Brigit turned the third corner, or was it the fourth?—looking for the right set of doors. Unfortunately they all looked the same, dark mahogany with polished gold fixtures. Since they were private offices, none had names, much less numbers. It didn't matter. She never found her mother on the first try, no matter where she worked.

Green and gray carpet silenced her steps. Potted palms lined the halls like vibrant green sentries. The décor was modern, understated and tasteful. Not what she would have expected considering how her mother always bragged about the company. The last time she'd been to the offices had been several years ago, before she'd left to live with her dad and stepmother in L.A. Brigit hadn't remembered the halls then. Why did she think she would now?

Stopping in front of a pair that she *thought* were the right ones, she knocked.

A male's voice, though, was what she heard in reply. *Drat. Strike one.*

Well, maybe he'd know. Answering the greeting to enter, she did, swinging the door inward. "Hi. Sorry to interrupt," she began. At the sound of her voice, a dark haired head snapped up, exposing the most unusual eyes she'd ever seen.

"Can I help you?"

Green and blue. *No.* One was green, the other was a mosaic of blue and green.

"I said, can I help you?"

Brigit focused, noting he seemed a bit cross at the interruption, her silence, or both. "Oh! Sorry." She swept a nervous hand through her short, blonde hair. It was hard, not *hard* to look at him, but she found it hard to stop staring, he was so beautiful. Rugged, tailored. Gorgeous. She licked her lips, remembering he'd spoken a question. "I was looking for Mom. I struck out. I couldn't remember where her offices were."

The man with the most exquisite eyes straightened in his chair. "And your mother is..."

"Traci Boothes."

The man frowned. "Traci left us over a month ago."

"What?" Brigit blinked rapidly.

"How did you get up to these floors?"

"The secretary downstairs..." She floundered. "Said... She's gone?" How long had it been since she'd talked to her mom? Why hadn't she told Brigit she was leaving?

"What's the problem?"

Brigit whirled and looked up. *Oh God.* Another sexilicious bod just appeared behind her. Not as dark, but just as handsome. Her heart was pounding within her chest. Her nipples tightened, and she had to draw a breath to try to ease the sensation. It didn't help. He smelled incredible. Whatever cologne he wore, she was buying it by the case.

"Please." The man standing with her gestured for her to enter the office. She backed up, unable to tear herself away. Quietly, the door closed behind him. The door locking sounded like a rifle shot through the air to her.

He leaned against the door, crossing his arms over a chest most begged for, either to have or to touch. Raising her gaze, she locked with his. Her skin grew tight. Heat burned in those antique gold eyes. A desire that he didn't even try to hide. Her body ached as she responded, unable to ignore the primal call, male to female. It happened so quickly, with such a heady rush, she couldn't fight it even if she wanted to. She had only one option. She had to run.

Brigit whirled. She had to get out of there. The other man was standing now and was moving around his desk.

"I'm sorry. She's gone?" Brigit prodded, hoping one would give her an answer.

The one she watched neared. "Yes, about five weeks ago. You are her daughter?"

Brigit followed his gait until he stopped only a foot or two away. Both men, broad, tall and fierce, blocked her in. "Brigit," she managed on a squeak.

The man with the unique eyes lifted his head to peer over her. He nodded, though his frown didn't completely disappear. "Ja'Rol recognizes the name, but we both believed Traci's daughter to be much older, and with her father."

Brigit gaped. "Wait. Older? What were you expecting? Gray hair like hers? I'm twenty-eight, thank you very much. And I *was* with Dad. I just got home from a summer in Paris. I haven't talked to Mom since before I left."

"I see." Then before her eyes, he seemed to change, losing the suspicious posture. Offering a hand, he said, "I am Slone Wilkes, and this is Ja'Rol David. My apologies. We weren't expecting any visitors, and no one notified us you were on the way."

She hesitated, then allowed it. No reason she couldn't be polite. "Why? Do you have deep, dark secrets on this floor?" she whispered, leaning close. "Dead bodies?"

Ja'Rol eased from behind her, chuckling. "No, to either, but we are almost completely alone up here. Since your mom left..." He trailed off, and both men looked nearly heartbroken.

"Wait, wasn't she just your secretary or something?"

Ja'Rol's laughter returned. "Hardly. That woman knew this business, and our schedules, like clockwork. We've been muddling through without her, but she refused to stay. She has called. I have her number. Would that help you?"

"Oh! Yes, please. Usually I pop up without warning and it's not a problem. I guess she didn't realize it was that time of year again."

Slone guided her to a seat. "Are you close?" He sat across from her as Ja'Rol went to Slone's computer and typed in something.

"Pretty close, though living a country away has left gaps," she admitted, then bit her lip. Why the hell would she divulge something like that to these two strangers?

"We'll help you find her," the one seated across from her said, easing her conscience. "She may have worked for us, but I know she was close to Ja'Rol."

"Slone isn't the kind to fraternize too closely," Ja'Rol supplied, writing on a small pad of paper. "But he's the head of the heads, so to speak, so he forgets to at least pretend to be human at times."

Brigit smiled at the teasing jab. Slone slid a disgruntled look to the man at the computer, who, when he looked up, only shrugged.

"It's true. You get in here and forget there's a world outside those doors."

"Someone has to keep the business from going up in flames."

That remark caused a hefty row of snickers. Clearing his throat, Ja'Rol rounded the desk to lean against it in front of her. He held the paper in his fingers. "Before I give this to you, can you prove you're her daughter?"

Brigit frowned. Her license wouldn't do. Her mother had never taken her father's last name. Not that she could really blame her. It was long and clearly Greek – literally. "I know her birthday!" she offered.

Ja'Rol nodded. "Shoot."

"May twenty-third." Watching their expressions, she realized they couldn't tell if she was right. "Call her, let me talk to her. She'll tell you I'm not a murderer. Well, except for houseplants, but I can't be charged for horticultural homicide, right?"

Ja'Rol laughed again. "She's funny."

Between them, he did seem to be the more relaxed of the two.

"Okay." Slone nodded toward the phone and Ja'Rol grabbed it, dragging it close. He dialed and waited.

"Hi, Traci. No, the company has not crashed and burned." He rolled his eyes. "We seem to have a guest looking for you, your daughter. Sure." He offered the handset.

Brigit took it gratefully. "Hi, Mom."

"Oh dear! Is it September already?"

"Don't sound so thrilled," she replied, not sure if she should be miffed or not.

"Oh! No, it isn't that! I swear, sweetheart. It's just, well..." She sighed. "I'm leaving for Las Vegas in two days. Gene and I are going to get married this weekend. I got swept up in the details and reservations and lost track of time."

"You're really getting married?" She squealed, almost bouncing in her chair. "To Daddy Gene!" She let out a whoop. She caught out of the corner of her eye both men smiling. Well, that confusion was cleared. "I'm thrilled, Mom. You so deserve what he's got."

"Brigit!"

She snickered. "Out of the gutter, Mom. I mean he's good to you."

"Yes, he is. The only drawback was the move, but it couldn't be helped. You went to the offices looking for me?"

"Well, duh. I'm here with Slone and Ja'Rol." She loved letting that roll off her tongue. "And I'm using their busy working time to convince them I'm safe and sane, although I know the latter is always up for debate."

Her mother's laugh was lighthearted. "Love you, sweetheart. Grab a pen. I'll give you all the details."

"Okay." Glancing up, she found Ja'Rol holding a pen and the pad for her. "Go." She swiftly got all her mother's new information, with the dates she'd be back. "Do you want me to join you in Vegas?"

"Could you? What's your schedule like?"

"Let me call you tonight."

"Okay, honey. Kisses!"

"Kisses." Then she handed the phone back. "See? Not only am I safe, I've just been included in the wedding."

She fought the urge to stick her tongue out at them. At least to Ja'Rol. He'd get it. Slone was incredibly reserved. She didn't want to insult either of her mother's ex-bosses.

"Vegas, huh?" Ja'Rol asked.

"Two days." Brigit ran her fingers through her hair. How was she going to pull that off? She didn't have tons of cash and a flight forty-eight hours ahead was going to cost a fortune. A bus would be cheaper, but could she do it in two days?

"Let's surprise your mother," Ja'Rol offered. "We do miss her. She'd been with us for a long time."

"How?" she asked, questioning them both.

"Tell us where you're staying, and your number. We'll arrange for you to be picked up. We'll fly. A final gift to say goodbye for her." Slone sat, looking at her, hardly blinking.

"Won't that interrupt your week?"

Ja'Rol smiled. "It'll be worth it."

After giving them her information, she took a couple numbers with her in case something changed. She promised to be packed and ready by seven the next night to catch the flight with them.

Standing, she noticed again how they stood over her, tall and broad. Both watched her with a protective gleam, and with Ja'Rol, more than a hint of desire. She couldn't argue with what she saw in him. She felt it too, but being attracted to them both confused her. Just thinking about it made her nipples tighten more.

Feeling off kilter, she shook their hands, fighting to hide the tremble as heat flared up her arm to land in her stomach. It oozed like a hot lava flow to settle between her legs, making her damp with want the longer she stood with them.

"Until tomorrow," Slone said. His voice had dropped to a low timbre. The kind of voice that made women swoon off their feet. Because she almost did.

"Thank you for doing this," she said, trying to keep herself grounded. He smelled as good as Ja'Rol. *Damn*. What did they wear? She was so buying it.

"We're happy to. You should be with your mother when she shares vows with her soon to be husband."

Decadent. She was staring at the personification.

She licked her lips. "Tomorrow night?"

"Seven sharp," he replied. Still holding her hand, he lifted it and brushed the back of her knuckles with his lips, just the softest tease of heat to skin. Her body pulsed as liquid slicked her pussy. *Shit. I have got to get out of here before I combust.*

"Let me walk you to the way out," Ja'Rol offered.

Almost numb with need, she followed. Slone opened the door and with a hand to her back, she let Ja'Rol guide her to the elevator. "All the way to one," he told her.

She nodded. "I can get a cab."

"A cab?" He glanced at her, his eyes wider. "Not for Traci's daughter. I'll go down and call for the car. Are you already settled at your hotel?"

"Yes," she answered, feeling breathless.

"Good."

"It's not an imposition? Doesn't it take money to just drive me to my hotel?"

"You are now our guest, as we will be your guests to your mother's wedding. We take care of our guests."

She felt it was a losing battle, so she didn't push. Riding in the elevator was a torture. Not as rugged as Slone, dark brown hair, honey gold eyes, he was perfection.

Decadence and perfection. And she was about to be ensconced in an airplane for hours with the two of them.

Brigit swallowed the groan, crossing her arms to conceal her arousal.