

Chapter 1

Abigail

I was shaking with cold; utterly and completely frozen to the bone. I noticed it first thing when I woke up and it took a while before my brain rallied enough to pay attention to anything other than that terrible bone-rattling cold. The second thing was that I was most assuredly not in my cozy bedroom with its marvelous queen sized bed with memory foam mattress.

It did not smell like my lavender detergent here, instead the air was stale and musty. Although it was pitch black even with my eyes open to the max I could tell I was in what amounted to a coffin made of glass from the glimmer above my head. Fear and panic bubbled through my bloodstream and I wanted to scream for help, pound against the glass but I was shaking so badly from the pervasive cold I couldn't get a single muscle, not even my vocal chords, to obey.

Shit, shit, shit! This was a nightmare! This had to be a nightmare! But something told me that it wasn't, this was real. Trying to make sense of it all I worried I'd somehow died in my sleep or maybe slipped into some kind of coma and got mistaken for dead; and then I'd been buried. That was a thing right? Didn't I read somewhere that sometimes (though rarely) doctors mistakenly pronounced someone dead?

The air around me was warming though and as it did my shaking subsided a little until I could finally better sense my own skin instead of numbness from the cold. I was dressed, a relief for sure, in my suit from work. What idiot had decided to bury me in my work clothes? That was the last thing I wanted! If I never saw another day at my bank teller job again I'd be forever grateful.

In fact, moving my head I could tell the two rubber bands I'd used my last work day to restrain my thick curly hair were still in there. I'd used the makeshift solution because my favorite hairband had given out halfway through my work-shift. What did that tell me? Whatever had happened to me must have happened right after work, or I'd have gotten home and changed my clothes.

Moving my hands to touch the glass just above me I felt something dangle from my wrists. Wires, stuck to my skin like electrodes from a medical exam. Now that I was aware I felt more of them attached to my chest, tucked into my blouse and a pair attached to my temples and the sides of my neck. I yanked them off with a shiver, as if they were cobwebs. What the hell was this?

This wasn't a coffin was it? Why would they hook me up to electrodes inside a coffin? My brain tried to grasp for logical explanations and came up with a CT-scan or MRI, those were like a tube or something they stuck you in weren't they? Did I get into a car accident and didn't remember?

Then, from one moment to the next, light suddenly permeated the tiny space I was crammed into. It seared my eyes and blinded me. Before my eyes had even adjusted I was yanked from my resting place by rough, sandpaper textured hands until I dropped to a hard metal floor. Guttural, male voices were talking around me but I couldn't understand a word they were saying.

When my eyes finally adjusted I wished immediately that they hadn't. I had landed in a real nightmare, it was the only conclusion I could draw. The room around me was bright white and decked out with futuristic displays with blinking lights and a terrifying looking mechanical arm tucked in behind a glass panel against one wall, right beside a medical cot of some kind.

Antiseptic smells singed my nostrils making it at once clear this was indeed a medical room except it looked like something out of a scifi. Then there were the nightmarish looking wart faced men looming around me. Big and hulking with gray skin and tusks they looked to me like someone had crossed a Klingon with a warthog, with disastrous results.

One of them yanked me roughly off the floor and threw me onto the medical cot. I nearly rolled off on the other side, only stopped by the fact the bed rail on that side was raised. I screamed though, I couldn't help it, that thing was hideous and his grip had hurt on my upper arm. That more than accounted for the pinch to prove this wasn't a dream. Shit, shit and double shit! What the hell was going on?

I tried not to let another round of panic overcome me, I had to stay focused, I had to find out what was going on. Except it was really hard when these ugly gray fuckers were looming around me looking menacing and talking in an indecipherable guttural language.

Futuristic medical looking room, alien creatures, was I on a spaceship? About to be probed? Holy crap had I lost my mind completely or what? I knew I needed to get a grip but I couldn't seem to control my hyperventilating. As I struggled against the grip of the one pinning me to the medical cot there was excited talking among the others; something that sounded like orders being barked.

A new alien stepped into my field of view then, this one stunningly beautiful if terrifying looking in its otherness. Anthracite color shimmered and glittered with long, straight black hair draped around broad shoulders clad in white. Through the hair poked sharply pointed ears with silver rings and studs glinting against the dark skin.

It was his eyes though that freaked me out. They were like shimmering black mirrors, not a speck of white, not even an iris or pupil visible. Just a sheet of glimmering black that reflected everything like mirrors. It was truly terrifying to look at. These eyes, they were the kind of eyes they put on demons in movies or TV shows. They were truly evil.

Shaking I felt my body give into the freeze part of fight, flight or freeze; all of my muscles turning to stone. They were talking to the evil looking doctor-alien in harsh tones and then he pulled a tray of tools to him and approached me. Was that a scalpel? Fuck no!

When I struggled again the warthog aliens jumped into action, strapping me down to the medical bed until I couldn't move an inch. The shimmering black alien leaned over me and I couldn't keep looking when the scalpel approached my face. I squeezed my eyes shut tight; only briefly did I fight to keep my head straight when the alien grabbed my face and pressed down so my ear was pointing up.

Hot searing pain shot through me when the knife touched my skin just behind my ear. Oh god what were they doing to me? It seemed far too long that the alien was rooting around behind my ear with his knife and god knows what else. It was searing pain and freezing cold and I screamed and screamed until my throat was raw and I tasted blood.

The pain eased when some cool gel was smeared across the incision and then my head was turned and the whole process started again on my other ear. My voice gave out halfway through that side but to my shock, as the sound of my screaming faded I realized I could hear the guttural voices of the aliens around me and now their words made sense.

"I love how she screams, such a pretty sound," one was saying as he elbowed the ugly brute next to him. "Oh yeah," that one replied and he made a lewd gesture, "Too bad she's worth more intact."

The anthracite alien above me smeared cool gel behind my ear and the pain faded away. His large but fine fingered hand lifted away from pinning my head in place and as I twisted to better see the room he spoke too, his voice low and mournful, pitched so the gray skinned warthogs couldn't hear him. "I'm so sorry little human, they don't waste painkillers on slaves. Please forgive me." His voice was perhaps the most gentle thing I'd ever heard, so sad and apologetic.

"Are you done yet doc?" demanded one of them and the doctor who'd just done surgery on my ears shook his head. "I need to do another check to make sure everything's healthy before I give her the fertility drugs you wanted."

"Well hurry up!" was the response from the most mangy and small looking of the four ugly aliens. "Oh shut it Frek!" the largest one responded, "You were against spending credits on those faulty pods!" The huge monster gestured at the glass pod they'd pulled me out of propped in a corner. "And now you're invested because it worked?"

Everyone but Frek laughed, a creaking, sharp sound that had me flinching back into the medical cot I was on. It was at that moment that the doctor leaned over me, his hand pressing something into mine, which was hidden from the others behind my leg. "Bide your time, please try to survive. You can't fight the Krektar. Not alone."

It was the scalpel, still bloody from his surgery on me. I tucked it away into my pocket, hoping it wasn't going to slice open my leg. Why was this doctor giving me a weapon? Apologizing? And advising me against the ugly gray creatures?

I didn't get it until one of the Krektar, the huge one, approached and snapped a collar around my throat. It was a black metal band with a small box with lights attached to it and he pointed at the one around the doctor's throat. "Listen little slave, this is a pain collar." He held up a small remote, "One flick of this button and this is what happens." The ugly creature then pointed the remote at the doctor and with a mean grin turned it on.

Immediately the anthracite colored male grunted, his eyes scrunching closed while his whole body tensed up. Then he dropped to his knees and only just caught himself on clenched fists. His entire body shaking with pain. He didn't immediately start screaming but as the Krektar appeared to dial it up the doctor lost the fight, screaming out hoarsely before biting down hard on his bottom lip with teeth far too sharp to be human until he bled red blood in a puddle on the metal floor in front of him.

I stared in horror, torn between abject fear for myself and the need to stop this horrid slaver from inflicting pain on someone. Even if that someone had just inflicted terrible pain on me. Thankfully one of the other Krektar intervened, "Farn you idiot! That's enough! He still needs to make the fertility drug, he can't if you make the weakling pass out."

Farn, the biggest Krektar, lowered the remote. He moved it towards me with an unpleasant grin and I had time to see that the dial was turned nearly all the way up. If he made me experience that, I had no doubt I'd pass out in seconds. I wouldn't hang in there for nearly a minute like the doctor had.

He was already struggling back to his feet, his creepy black eyes even looked shiny with unshed tears. When the mangy one, Frek gave him a shove he stumbled towards the panel near my side, right next to the wall with the creepy robotic arm. With shaking hands he worked the touch screen until with a hissing sound a panel opened below. "This should work," he said through bloodstained lips.

With a deep breath he got his shaking hand under control and lifted a small metallic cylinder from the panel. "It'll only sting a little," he murmured and then he brought the thing down to my belly, unceremoniously rucking up my blouse and blazer to jam the thing into my tender skin. I hissed in shock but as promised it barely hurt at all.

"Done?" Demanded one of the Krektar males and when he nodded they started unstrapping me and without a backwards glance dragged me out of the medical room. I struggled at first, terrified of wherever they were taking me. None of them had said what I was here for. Then Farn waved a meaty fist in my face holding the remote and I stopped fighting, allowing them to easily escort me through several metal hallways in various stages of dirty and disgusting.

In fact I was relieved I was still wearing my uncomfortable but hella pretty black stilettos because the floor looked like it had been sprayed with blood in several places. Oh crap where were they taking me? It was getting progressively worse too.

Another wave of fear swamped me and I felt my eyes fill with tears, I furiously fought against those. Crying was *not* going to help here. I hadn't cried when the slave doctor had performed surgery on me without anesthesia. I wasn't going to cry now. Though I really wanted to have a nervous breakdown.

A massive metal door barred our progress when we turned a corner and Farn, who was in the lead keyed in a series of symbols on the small screen next to it. I was close enough to easily see what he did and tried my hardest to memorize the ten digit code (at least I assumed they were alien digits).

At my job at the bank I generally coasted by easy, at least in the numbers department because I had a head for them. I remembered numbers as easily as I remembered my own name. I hated my job because of the human element actually; I should have just become an accountant.

But my numbers quirk didn't help when I didn't actually know which numbers I was remembering. Whatever translator tech the doc had installed just went as far as translating what I heard, not what I saw unfortunately.

The door slid open with a groaning sound, its mechanism clearly struggling. It became obvious why only when I was ushered through the door, two massive dents near eye height on the door disfigured the frame here.

Beyond the panel lay what could only be described as a wholly medieval looking cell block. No futuristic lights or panels, no white walls like in the medical area. Just gray metal walls and a ceiling that stretched far higher than could be properly illuminated with the small yellowed and dirty floor lights that lined the hallway leading away between the two rows of cells.

The cells themselves consisted of metal walls on three sides and a barred front with no apparent door. The cell nearest to the door seemed empty and held only a small cot with a blanket and what appeared to be a metal bowl meant for waste. From its dirt encrusted state I could tell what was one of the main causes for the horrid stench that filled the place. It was clear none of these cells had been on the receiving end of a cleaning product in a long time.

"Are you sure about putting her in with the Beast Farn?" The mangy whiny one asked from my left. "If he tears her to shreds those hundred credits are a complete waste!" Those words did not fill me with confidence. Tear me to shreds? What the hell was the Beast? Which was clearly pronounced with a capital B.

“Oh shut it Frek,” one of the others growled back, “It’s not as if you wanted to pay your share of those credits anyway! And the Beast is unique, we’re going to get massively rich selling his offspring!” I could practically hear them salivating at those words, see the dollar signs in their freaky yellow eyes.

Except it sounded like they were planning on using me as a broodmare for whatever creature this Beast was, just to get rich. Was that the fertility shot the doctor had given me? To help get me pregnant? The thought of some creepy alien using me and then these evil bastards taking the resulting offspring was awful. God, these were terrifying thoughts. I actually considered fighting them so they ended up killing me.

And then there were the occupants of the cells; they were enough to give me nightmares. While the first two cells (one on either side) had been empty, the next four sets held a prisoner each. As it was very dark in each cell some of the occupants were hard to make out. But a few came all the way to the front, to the bars so I had a good view.

While the Krektar were ugly, they were bipedal and still appeared very humanoid, some of these prisoners barely resembled humans at all. I saw one male who was completely covered in a thick pelt and his head was shaped almost entirely like a fox; mobile ears, coloring and thick tail included. As I passed his cell he licked at his snout and leered from impressive height straight down my half opened shirt. And he was clearly male because the scrap of cloth that covered his sex was barely adequate.

Another male had skin that was so closely resembling rock it was uncanny and his legs were shaped like a lion’s legs, his face grotesque with fangs and tusks and horns. Huge leathery bat wings spread out behind his back with clawed tips. If gargoyles were real, this was exactly what one would look like.

I breathed a sigh of relief each time we continued on past another cell with yet another terrifying creature. The end of the hallway ended in a slightly larger cell and I had a sinking feeling we were headed for that one. It was completely swathed in shadows, so I couldn’t tell much about its occupant except for two glowing emerald green eyes. That wouldn’t be too terrifying on it’s own, if it weren’t for the fact that these eyes were at least seven feet off the ground. Whoever those eyes belonged to was humongous.

Now Farn paused, licking fat gray lips while he gave me a leer. “It occurs to me,” he growled with annoyance. “That we should have sampled her ourselves before getting doc to give her the fertility shot. After the Beast is done with her she’ll be ruined...”

There was some groaning and grumbling from the other three Krektar. Who I noted stayed well out of range of the long arm reach of any of the cells occupants. I wasn’t sure if I was relieved or not that they now couldn’t risk knocking me up themselves. Probably relieved; one rapist was better than five right?

“Rise and shine ugly!” Farn eventually yelled. He unhooked a long stick with metal prongs on one end from his belt and banged it against the bars of the largest cell at the end of the hall. “Show your ugly mug Beast, let your baby momma see what she’s in for before we lock her in the dark with you.”

I gulped in fear, my heart pounding and my palms sweaty as I awaited what was about to step into the meager light. This was going to be bad, I knew it. I was so desperately wishing I’d never gotten

up that morning for work. God it probably wasn't anywhere close to the same day was it? I'd probably been in, what I'm now realizing was a stasis pod, for a long time.

My attention was roughly snapped to the cell, away from my panicky spiraling thoughts, when the cell's occupant stepped up in front of the bars and into the light. Holy hell! My breath stalled for a moment as I took him in. This guy truly was humongous, he was nearly eight feet tall.

The male before me was bipedal, with two arms and opposable thumbs but that was pretty much where the resemblance to a human ended. If you compared him to a crocodile on two feet you'd come closer, due to the green scales that covered him entirely.

Though his head was actually shaped more like that of a bull placed on top of a neck more like a triangle, his trapezius muscles more like actual trapezoids than those on your average steroid-using gym rat. The reason for those huge muscles was obvious when you took in the bull horns that splayed wide and heavy from the sides of his head, they spanned easily three feet.

A blunted snout with a wide nose topped a maw filled with razor sharp teeth, the canines long and pointed and deadly sharp. A thick gold ring pierced the nose and a row of glinting blades rose like a mohawk across his scalp to his back.

Fuck, crap, damn... I cursed in my head. His thighs were thicker around than my hips and that was saying something (if you listened to my roommate). Not to mention that those huge arms and feet were tipped with thick black claws and crap but was that a spiked lizards tail swaying behind him? Oh god no, they wanted me to mate with this thing? Was it even sentient?

I felt like utter crap for thinking that the next moment. There was a pain collar tightened around that huge neck, he wasn't here by choice any more than I was. Then I noted the one soft feature on his huge body, long ears, attached to his head just below the jutting horns, they were shaped sort of like a corn husk. Soft and mobile looking they flicked once when my eyes landed on them, then drooped all the way down when I flinched at the sudden movement.

"On your knees!" Barked Farn, and he jabbed at the huge alien's thickly muscled belly with his pronged stick. He slid out of the way effortlessly, his emerald eyes fixated on my face. He'd moved with a dancers grace despite his big body, and he hadn't even looked at the Krektar wielding a weapon at him through the bars.

The other Krektar were chiming in, all shrilly ordering for the Beast to get on his knees. He wasn't obeying though, a rebellious fire in his green eyes. When Farn raised the remote for his pain collar the huge male bared his mouth full of teeth and growled deep and low. Then on the sides of his arms sharp looking blades fanned out and the blades growing out of his skull flicked upright, adding a good foot to his height.

The growl had clearly been directed at Farn but when I flinched back from the ferocious display those green orbs settled on me again. I had a feeling of keen and even calculated intelligence. The next moment he focused on Farn and his pronged stick and in a move so fast I couldn't follow he'd yanked Farn right up against the bars. One fist had a hold of the stick and the other was wrapped around Farn's throat.

There was a moment of stunned silence from everyone and then a cracking sound that would probably echo in my dreams for a long time to come. The Beast tossed Farn's body away from the cell with a contemptuous flick of his thick wrist; making it look effortless to throw the six foot tall

Krektor right at my feet. He grinned then and for a sick moment I wondered if he thought he'd just given me a gift.

The next moment the cell block broke out in utter chaos. The other slaves imprisoned where hooting and yelling, stomping their feet in applause for the Beast's act. The other Krektor where yanking me back, shrieking in anger and fear and then there was the Beast's roar of victory.

Until it ended when one of the Krektor, Frek, the scrawny one, found his pain remote and pressed the switch, dialed all the way up to max. The Beast stared at my face the entire time his body convulsed from the pain coursing through his nerves on the highest setting. Unlike with the anthracite doctor who'd collapsed to his knees after a minute; the Beast stood his ground against that pain for long minutes. A huge, immovable bulwark against oppression it seemed to me.

Eventually his eyes rolled into the back of his head and he collapsed, his body hitting the metal floor with a thud so loud I felt the vibrations of it shake up through my own legs. And they wanted me to mate with this creature?

Frek was ordering the other two to push me into the cell, it seemed that despite Farn's death by broken neck and his initial resistance to this plan he was going ahead with it anyway. A click of a button on one of their wrist watches (much like a smartwatch) and several bars to the Beast's cell lowered into the ground.

"Get in!" yelled one of the two whose name I didn't know. I thought the two might actually be twins, or clones, they looked so identically ugly. A wave from Frek's hand with the pain remote, just to warn me what they'd do if I didn't obey and I found myself squaring my shoulders, raising my chin and stepping over the Beast's collapsed body into the cell. Fake it till you make it right? I told myself and my quaking knees.

The bars rose up behind me with a definitive snick.