



DIVIDED

BRIDES OF THE KINDRED 10

EVANGELINE
ANDERSON

Brides of the Kindred

Book 10: Divided

Evangeline Anderson

KINDLE EDITION

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Book 10: Divided
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Author's Note #1— First of all, please no piracy. It's not a victimless crime—I have a family to support so please, buy your own copy and encourage friends to do the same so I can keep writing the books for everyone's pleasure.

Author's note #2—Most of you know I'm writing another series as well as the Kindred now—a set of paranormal books called Born to Darkness. If you haven't checked them out yet, they are on Amazon, Smashwords, and All Romance. The first book is *Crimson Debt* and the second one is *Scarlet Heat*. And yes, I'm still working on *Ruby Shadows*. I got about 30,000 words in and my muse abruptly demanded to write *Chained* instead. Then my muse wanted more Kindred so I wrote *Divided*. And now...*sigh* she appears to be intent on still MORE Kindred so I am working on *Devoured*, Kindred #11. Sorry guys, please don't hate me! I promise to get back to *Ruby Shadows* eventually. But I have learned from years in this business, that a book NEVER comes out well when there is another book my muse really wants to be writing waiting on the backburner. Hopefully when I finish *Devoured*, I can get back to the Born to Darkness series.

Author's Note #3—This is the tenth book in the Brides of the Kindred series and there are at least more to come. I recommend that you read *Claimed*, *Hunted*, *Sought*, *Found*, *Revealed*, *Pursued*, *Exiled*, *Shadowed*, and *Chained* before beginning *Divided* or you are going to be completely lost.

Hugs and Happy Reading to you all!
Evangeline Anderson

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Chapter One

“So Maggie is making a full recovery?” Kat ate another bite of donut. “Mmm, *delicious*.”

“You say that about everything you eat,” Olivia said with a laugh.

“Just feeding my boys.” Kat winced and put a hand to her very round belly. “Settle down, you two! I’m eating as fast as I can.” She looked at Liv and shrugged. “See? Can’t help it—they want Krispy Kreme donuts. So—Maggie?”

“I’ve been keeping a good eye on her at the Med station and she’s getting better every day. It’s a miracle, really. There were some recording devices stationed in the town square and I saw what happened to her—she should have died of those injuries. All she had was some blood loss.”

“According to her, she *did* die,” Becca Malone said quietly. “She claims she was brought back for a purpose.”

“I believe it,” Kat said, looking uncharacteristically somber. “The Goddess spared my life to you know—she did it for Deep when he offered to switch places with me and die in my stead.”

“That’s exactly what Maggie said Kor told her that he was thinking...or praying or whatever when Lissa started channeling the Goddess,” Liv said.

“The Goddess recognizes and rewards self-sacrifice—especially when it’s between a bonded pair,” Kat remarked. She looked at Becca. “Hey, you were almost a nun—what do you think about all this?”

“I think Maggie is a lucky girl but she’s brave too—she went out to face the demon knowing she could kill her,” Becca said. She sighed. “I only wish I could be that brave. Sometimes I think my whole life has been about taking the safest paths and making the decisions I thought would ruffle the fewest feathers.”

“Speaking of decisions...” Sophie put a hand to her temple and winced. “I’m afraid your own personal decision is headed our way, Becca. Sylvan just bespoke me and said that Truth and Far are both on their way to our suite.”

Kat groaned. “Not both at the same time? There’s always so much tension around those two—it’s like being caught in the middle of a lightning storm when you have to be in the same room with them.”

“Do they still expect you to choose between them?” Liv asked.

Becca nodded. “Ever since I finally announced that I was giving up my calling to the Church, they won’t leave me alone.”

“Oh, so you definitely won’t be a nun?” Sophia asked sympathetically. “That must be hard.”

“Harder on my family than me.” Becca sighed. “My mother cried for days and my father threatened to disown me. But I just...” She looked down at her hands, trying to think how to put it all behind her. “After what I experienced in the Sacred Grove that day with Truth and Far...it’s like...like a part of me was woken up. A part I didn’t know I had, but now that it’s awake I can’t put it back to sleep again.”

“That part wouldn’t happen to be your sex drive, would it?” Kat asked frankly.

“Maybe.” Becca felt her cheeks getting hot. “I just *can’t* take a vow of celibacy now that I know what I’m missing—at least in part—what I’d be missing. It wouldn’t be honest to myself or to God. It wouldn’t be right.”

“You have to do what’s right for you,” Liv said. “Don’t let your family or Truth or Far or anyone else dictate your life—you choose what you want and who you want to be with.”

“But speaking of that, how can she possibly just choose one?” Kat protested. “That’s like saying you’ll choose which half of your body to keep.”

“It might seem like that to you, Kat. But I...” Becca shook her head. “I can’t be with both. It’s already killing my family to know I failed to take my vows. I can’t tell them I want to be with...with two men at once on top of that.”

“I used to feel the same way.” Kat nodded. “I was worried about my grandmother—she’s real strict.”

“Not as strict as my parents, I bet.” Becca looked down. “You know they sent me away to convent school when I was just seven? I never even saw a boy who wasn’t my brother until I was eleven or twelve.” She sighed. “That was because my father wanted to keep me pure. And he thought he had succeeded. Until now.”

“Oh, hon...” Kat reached over and squeezed her hand. “You can’t beat yourself up over what happened with Truth and Far or about how you feel now. After all, the heart wants what the heart wants.”

“But I don’t know *what* my heart wants,” Becca protested, pushing a reddish-brown curl behind her ear. “When I’m with Truth, I’m so drawn to his fire but when I’m with Far, I love his quiet intensity. And I just—”

Suddenly there was a soft chime at the door and all the girls but Becca groaned.

“And *there* they are,” Sophia muttered. “Becca can you please tell them to keep it down? Kaleb and Kara are napping and if they wake up too soon I’ll have a terrible time with them tonight.”

“I’ll do better than that.” Becca put down her half eaten donut. “I’ll take them on a walk and keep them away entirely.”

There was a chorus of protest.

“Oh, no, hon—you don’t have to do that,” Olivia protested.

“As long as they keep their voices down it should be all right,” Sophia said.

“We know how you don’t want to be alone with the two of them at once,” Kat remarked. “I mean—have you ever, since the, uh, wedding?”

Becca shook her head. “No, I’ve spent time with them one-on-one and I’ve spent time with them together when we were in a group of people, but I haven’t been *alone* with both of them at once since our first meeting.” She took a deep breath. “But it’s time I started facing my problems and stopped using my friends as a buffer.”

“But you don’t have to—” Sophia began.

“Yes, I do,” Becca said firmly. “Maggie was brave enough to face certain death when her marriage was indwelled by a demon. I can at least be brave enough to face the two men I have to choose between.”

“All right then,” Kat said doubtfully. “Good luck, doll.”

“Do you want any of us to put on a think-me and bespeak you after a little while—you know, pretend there’s a problem and we need you back here?” Olivia asked practically.

“No. I’ll be fine.” Becca didn’t know if she was trying to convince her friends...or herself. Her heart was pounding as she made her way to the door of Sophia’s suite but she forced herself to keep moving. She let her hand hover over the door release and took a deep breath. *Here goes.* Then she pressed the latch.

Chapter Two

When the door *whooshed* open, Becca saw that Truth and Far were already in mid-argument.

“...think you should leave her alone,” Far was saying, his pitch black eyes filled with icy anger.

“You’d like that, wouldn’t you? If I’d just step aside and give you a free shot with *my* female”

Truth growled, his white-gray eyes snapping with fire.

“She’s not your female. She’s—”

“Stop it, the two of you,” Becca said sharply. “I don’t belong to either one of you so stop fighting over me like a couple of dogs with a bone.”

Truth frowned. “What’s a dog?”

“You know—one of those yapping, growling little animals from Earth. Always barking and sniffing around places they *don’t belong*.” Far gave his brother a significant look and then smiled at Becca. “I prefer cats myself.”

“Well, *I* prefer not to be out with a couple of squabbling children.” Becca put a hand on her hip. “Look at you two—you’re grown ass men. Now *act* like it.”

She saw the brothers exchange a surprised look and felt a surge of triumph. Olivia was right—was time to take control of her life. And part one of that plan was getting these two in order.

“We’re sorry,” Far said contritely. “At least, *I* am.”

“I am as well. Apologies if I have offended you.” Truth made her a short bow.

“You’re both forgiven—for now.” Becca took a deep breath. “Now, I thought it would be nice if we took a walk.”

“Oh?” Truth frowned. “Which one of us did you wish to walk with? Actually, I think it’s *my* turn.”

“No, it’s not.” Far glowered at his brother. “It’s *my* turn.”

“Boys...” Becca held up her hands to stop them. “You’re *doing* it again.”

They both muttered apologies but neither looked happy.

“Good.” Becca took a deep breath. “Anyway, I don’t want to pick just one of you to go on a walk with. I thought it would be nice if we all three went.”

“Really?” Far looked surprised.

“Is this really necessary?” Truth’s face was like a thundercloud.

“Yes, it is,” Becca said firmly. “Now, let’s go. Maybe we can go down to the common area and get some sun.” She was referring, of course, to the artificial green sun that hung in the center of the Kindred Mother Ship. It was the ship’s power source and it also shed light over the Sacred Grove and the vast, grassy parkland that surrounded it.

“What—down by the place where we first met?” Truth asked, looking at her significantly.

“Um...yes.” Becca felt her cheeks heating in a blush when she considered what their first “meeting” had entailed. It was the first and last time she had touched either of the brothers sexually—or rather, they had touched her. She knew Truth and Far were thinking of it too.

“Look what you’ve done—you embarrassed her,” Far accused his brother.

“Apologies,” Truth murmured, his eyes still trained on her face. “I just wanted to be certain I knew what my lady wanted.”

“That’s right, Becca *is* a lady and you should treat her as such—not some automated Pairing Puppet you want to—”

“Enough!” Becca held up her hands again. “Come on, let’s walk. And listen, boys—if you can say anything nice to each other then don’t say anything at all.”

That shut them up at last and the three of them walked in silence down the long, curving metal corridor towards the transports that would take them to the common area.

Becca walked between the brothers but she was very, *very* careful not to touch them. She kept her hands securely in her pockets and her elbows tucked close to her torso to avoid brushing either one of the big male bodies bracketing hers. She was wearing a t-shirt and a modest knee-length denim skirt but her casual clothing didn’t feel like nearly enough of a barrier. She wished she hadn’t forgotten her cardigan back at the guest suite she was staying at—not because she was cold but because it would have formed another layer of insulation...protection between herself and the men.

Anyone watching her careful avoidance would probably think she was being so cautious because of her background as a novice and her attempt to retain her chastity—but they would be only half right. Becca had other reasons to avoid contact with the two of them.

As they walked, she reflected that she didn’t have to be nearly so careful when she was with either one of them alone. Far liked to hold her hand and stroke her fingers when they talked and Truth loved kissing the pulse point of her wrist—probably because that was the only place Becca would allow him to kiss her. But though both of these contacts made her heart quicken pleasantly, neither one felt *dangerous*. Being with the two of them—especially being *between* the two brothers—did.

Even now, Becca wished she could walk on one side or the other and not be in the middle but that was impossible—she always had to act as a buffer between them or they fought like cats and dogs.

You’re not a buffer, whispered a little voice in her head. You’re a conduit. A catalyst. A channel between the two of them. And when they touch you both at once...

Becca shivered, trying to push the thought away but she couldn’t help remembering the one and only time she had touched both brothers skin-to-skin at the same time. The electricity that had jumped between them, the pleasure so intense it was scary, not to mention the way they were suddenly all looking at each other’s heads and the things she had seen...felt...experienced...

It was only that way because I ate the bonding fruit cake, she told herself uneasily. I’m sure I would be perfectly safe for me to touch them both now.

All the same she kept her hands in her pockets. She might be brave enough to go out with both of them at once, but she wasn’t *that* brave. Small steps—she would take small steps and see where they led her. And there was no way she was risking that scary pleasure again—not today, anyway. It was too easy to lose herself that way and after finally deciding not to take her vows, Becca felt like she was just beginning to *find* herself. She didn’t want to lose the ground she’d gained.

“Well, here we are,” Truth said as they stepped out onto the park-like common area.

“Thank you for that, Captain Oblivious,” Far muttered.

“I believe the Earth term is ‘Captain *Obvious*,’” Truth growled, frowning.

“No, I think I got it right the first time.” Far raised an eyebrow at his brother meaningfully.

“Boys, *please!*” Becca glared at the two of them. “I swear—it’s like being with a pair of Kindergarteners!”

She stalked off, heading over the grassy plain dotted with green and purple trees and happy Kindred families, leaving them to either catch up or argue.

Unfortunately, they did both.

“I think we should stay away from the Sacred Grove,” Far was saying under his breath as the girl came up to her again. “It might bring back...memories.”

“What’s so wrong with that?” Truth demanded. “I swear that was the only time I could stand being in the same space with you.”

“And I, you, *Brother*,” Far spat.

Becca sighed mentally. Back in high school she might have thought that being fought over by two hot guys was a rush but she was well past that stage now. The constant bickering between the two of them was *really* getting old. Trying to tune them out, she watched as a human girl tried to show her Beast Kindred boyfriend how to play Frisbee.

“Look,” the girl was saying. “You hold it like this and then just give it a fling—it’s all in the wrist.”

“What is the point of this game?” her Kindred boyfriend growled, his amber eyes flashing.

“To catch it and throw it back, of course.” The girl was half exasperated, half laughing. “Come on—it’s fun.”

“So you say. I fail to see the inherent amusement in throwing a flat disk back and forth.”

“It’s good exercise too!” the girl said.

“I prefer shedding the blood of my enemies.” The Beast Kindred glowered. “It is not nearly so...*ridiculous* as jumping and running after a plastic disk.”

“I’m sure shedding enemy blood *is* more aerobically effective but no enemy is going to *kiss* you like I do when you make a good catch.” The girl batted her eyelashes at her Kindred who looked suddenly more interested.

“Is that so?”

“Yeah—that’s so. Come on, what do you say?”

Becca felt a flash of envy run through her as she watched the flirty little exchange.

*She only has **one** guy to worry about. One partner to deal with. Why did I have to get stuck with two? Why did I have to get stuck at all? I would have taken my vows and become a good nun. Now I have to doubt myself and everything in my life—all because of what happened when I mistakenly ate the wrong piece of cake. It’s not fair!*

“Are you ready?” the girl asked her boyfriend.

He sighed, though Becca could tell he was really enjoying himself.

“I suppose. Fling it, then.”

The girl wound up and threw the Frisbee in a comically high arch which was destined to go right over her boyfriend’s head. Despite his initial reluctance, however, he appeared determined to do his best. The look on his dark face seemed to say that if she wanted him to play such a foolish game, he was damn well going to play it to the best of his ability. Accordingly, he took a running jump for the Frisbee...

And crashed into Becca, one thick, meaty elbow hitting her directly in the forehead.

“Oof!” she gasped, going down hard. Or she would have, if there hadn’t been a big male body cushion her blow.

“Becca? *Mi’now?*” That would be Far. The name he called her was a word in the Twin Kindred dialect which meant something like “cherished one” or “beloved.”

“Get off her, you oaf,” growled another voice which was certainly Truth. Then he was on the other side of her saying, “Are you well, Rebecca?” He usually called her by her full name when he was

worried or really serious about something.

“Fine...I’m fine,” Becca tried to say but the words came out so faint she couldn’t even hear them herself. Her throbbing head was being cushioned in someone’s lap and someone else was propping up her knees.

“Leave her alone,” Far was saying as he stroked her hair gently away from her hurt forehead. “Call the nearest Med Station.”

“I’m not leaving her,” Truth’s deep, growling voice sounded angry and belligerent. “You go run for help. I’ll stay here.” As he spoke, he lifted her knees a little higher, trying to make her comfortable on the grassy ground.

Becca felt a surge of warning zip through her. They were close—way too close, the both of them. If they both touched her bare skin at the same time...

And then they did.

Chapter Three

“Ahh!” Becca’s back arched as a sudden wave of electricity raced through her. All at once her nipples were painfully hard and her pussy was throbbing with need. The big, warm, male hands on her body seemed to radiate heat and lust, spreading a growing desire throughout her entire being until she was nearly panting with need.

No, she thought wildly even as the sensations continued and intensified. No, we can’t do this. This is what happened before. If we don’t break the connection we’re going to start hearing each other’s thoughts and—

It’s happening again. Truth’s mental voice was as growly as his regular one.

I thought last time was a one-time occurrence. Far sounded bewildered. *Because Becca had eaten that bonding fruit confection.*

Guess you thought wrong, Brother, Truth sent.

Despite her growing need, Becca couldn’t help but notice that Truth had named Far as his brother without a trace of irony or condescension for what was probably the first time ever.

Is she all right? Far asked. *I’m worried about her—about all of us. This...union affects me strangely.*

If you mean it makes you horny as the Seven Hells, then you’re not alone, Truth growled. *I’m as hard as a rock.*

Me as well. Do you think it affects our lady the same way?

And that was the first time Far had referred to her as “our” lady, Becca couldn’t help noting.

I...I’m here, she sent to both of them.

Are you well? Far asked at once.

I’m fine. I just...feel strange.

Do you feel it too? Truth asked. *The sexual need?*

I...I don’t really know.

Don’t bother lying, Truth sent flatly. *I’m touching you. You know I’ll be able to tell.*

I could be wrong, Brother, but it seems to me that accusing our lady of lying is not the quickest way to her heart, Far sent dryly.

I just want the truth—that’s all. I want to hear it from her. I want to know how you feel, Truth demanded of her.

I feel...you know how I feel, Becca sent desperately. *I feel...hot...needy. But I don’t understand why—I didn’t eat any bonding fruit this time. It’s so confusing!*

What’s so confusing about it? Truth murmured. *You may have taken an oath of purity with your mind but your heart needs love and your body needs pleasure, Rebecca.*

What she took was a vow of celibacy and we have already forced her to break it once, Far reminded him acerbically.

We didn’t exactly break it, Becca sent anxiously.

Actually, they had really only bent it a little and it had been mostly all in her head—well, in all three of their heads—just as they were now. When she’d confessed what she had done later to Kat, the other girl had been amazed that Becca had been able to do so little to overcome the deadly dose

bonding fruit she'd consumed. Kat declared she still couldn't figure out why Becca had been able to confine her urges to mental gymnastics, declaring that she'd never heard of anyone who didn't have to have actual physical sex in order to get over the effects of the powerful aphrodisiac agents in the bonding fruit...

That's right, Truth agreed, obviously thinking along the same lines. We didn't break your oath—mostly we just imagined what we wanted to do to you...didn't we? Something along these lines...

A vivid mental image in her mind's eye suddenly showed her in bed with Truth, and neither of them was wearing any clothes.

I believe I helped too, Far sent and suddenly he appeared in bed as well.

Becca gasped at the sight of her own naked self being bracketed by two huge, muscular males. They were all lying on their sides and she was facing Far. Truth was behind her, pressing his pelvis against her bare behind and running one hand possessively over the curve of her hip.

The sight was so real Becca could almost feel the heat of both big bodies on either side of her. She could practically smell the warm, masculine scent the brothers seemed to make only when they were together. She never detected it when she was with just one of them but when they were side by side and almost touching, the scent was enough to make her weak with lust. Strangely, though, no one else ever seemed to smell it. Becca had wondered about it from time to time but since Truth and Far were almost never in such close proximity, it didn't usually bother her.

It was bothering her now, though. Along with the sight of the three of them naked and caressing each other, the scent was making her hotter and hotter. It was almost too much to stand.

Truth! she protested, breathlessly. *Truth, please...*

Goddess above, I love your luscious full ass, Rebecca, he murmured. *Love how you're not a skinny bag of bones like so many of the Earth girls I've seen.*

And I love your breasts, mi'now, Far whispered through the strange link they seemed to share. In the image she was watching, Becca saw him bend his head and kiss the full slopes of her bare breasts possessively. *Are your nipples truly as dark as Truth imagines them?* he asked, kissing one lightly. *We have no females with your lovely skin color on Twin Moons. I find it most erotic.*

Far, not you too! Becca sent. *I...we shouldn't be doing this. You know we shouldn't.*

Why not? It's what we did last time and we all enjoyed it, Truth pointed out. *As I recall, Rebecca, you came most beautifully when we enjoyed your body. Here, turn to me.* He turned her toward him and leaned in to kiss her on the mouth.

Becca pulled back. *But...but I was under the influence of the bonding fruit then!* she protested uncertainly. *I...it shouldn't be this way now. I don't understand why we're all feeling this way.*

Maybe we just long to be together. Far turned her back towards himself and kissed her nipple again and this time Becca swore she could feel the heat of his mouth as he flicked out the tip of his tongue to taste her. God, she was losing all track of reality! Was she still lying prone on the grass after getting elbowed in the head by the Beast Kindred? Or were the three of them really somewhere naked in bed, about to do things they really shouldn't be doing? They had to stop this—stop it before it went too far! Last time she'd had a valid excuse to be horny out of her mind, this time she hadn't eaten any bonding fruit. There was no way to justify such behavior to herself—none at all.

Please, she sent. *I don't...don't want to do this.*

Then why is your body so ready for me? Truth murmured. *Don't lie, Rebecca—you know I can always tell.*

She responds to my touch as well. Far stroked one large, warm hand down her side. *Com*

mi'now, Truth is wrongheaded in most things but you cannot deny that he's right about how you're feeling.

My body may be saying yes but my mind is saying no! Becca sent desperately. *Listen to me—you need to stop now.*

We must listen to her, brother. Becca's wishes must be respected. Reluctantly, Far stopped kissing her breasts.

Truth sighed and stopped rubbing his hand over her bare ass. *All right but I still say you should listen to your body, not your mind. You must need this kind of release or we wouldn't have fallen into this strange dream-state a second time the moment we touched.*

Not everything has to be about lovemaking, Far objected. *There may be some other, perfect logical reason why we find ourselves bound together. There may be—*

Suddenly Becca heard howling—a long, liquid moan like a wolf pack in full cry. The chilling lonesome sound sent a shiver down her spine and she felt a sudden sense of foreboding she couldn't explain.

What was that? she asked, looking around wildly. *That sound—what was it?*

I don't know but I don't fucking like it, Truth growled.

The harbinger. Far's deep voice was soft and unhappy. *It is the harbinger.*

The what? What in the Seven Hells is a harbinger? Truth demanded.

It's a warning. I only hear it when I'm about to have a vision, Far explained. *But I've never heard anyone else hear it with me before. I've never—*

Suddenly the bed they were in disappeared and they found themselves in another part of the Mother Ship. Becca saw that all different kinds of Kindred warriors were talking and walking around. Some were eating, some using Think-mes to speak to loved ones, some arguing or talking to each other. Strangely, though, there were no females in sight—it was all males.

All men. And I'm... Becca looked down at herself and saw that she was still naked. The other Kindred males seemed not to see her but still... *Far!* she complained, trying to cover herself with her hands and arms. *Since this is your vision will you please put some clothes on me? And put some on Truth and yourself too. I don't need to see all that.*

I can't. Far still sounded distressed. *The vision shows what it will. I cannot change it.*

Well, maybe I can, Truth said. *Let's see...*

Looking anxiously down at her naked self, Becca suddenly saw her nipples go a shade lighter.

Hey—what? she began angrily.

Sorry, Truth sent, sounding anything but. *I just thought I might have gotten it wrong before. Should they be darker, then?*

Clothes! Now! Becca demanded.

Sorry, Rebecca, he sent again. *But I—*

Hush, can't you feel it? The vision is coming, Far whispered. *This will be a bad one—I can tell.*

How can you tell? Becca sent anxiously, forgetting to be angry.

I just know. I feel it in my bones.

Far sounded so apprehensive that Becca felt a shiver run down her bare back. Truth, however, evidently didn't feel the same.

What is this? he demanded. *What's supposed to be so frightening about the Unmated Males are of the ship? What—*

Suddenly all the activity around them ceased. One moment all of the various Beast and Blood and Twin Kindred were going about their business and the next they all froze. Then, as she and Truth and Far watched, Becca saw every single one of their heads lift up to look at the vaulted ceiling of the Mother Ship above. It was eerie—as though they were all puppets being pulled by the same string.

What in the Seven Hells is going on? Truth demanded. This time even he sounded anxious and uncertain. *What are you doing, Brother?*

Nothing—I do not make the visions—they come to me.

We'll make it stop—you're scaring our lady.

I cannot. The vision must run its course. Look!

A dark cloud of black smoke was suddenly coming down, drifting like a deadly rain from the vents in the ceiling far above. As it touched them, the warriors in the Unmated Males section began to change.

It happened all at once. To Becca's horror, their faces began to run like wax, revealing horrible dark visages beneath. Their handsome, regular features became sneering, leering masks of evil and hatred.

And then their eyes began to glow...

* * * * *

"Ahh!" Becca came back to herself yelling in terror. She sat up so fast she almost knocked Far who was leaning over her anxiously, in the head. He sat back just in time and she was able to launch herself up off the grass.

But standing up so suddenly made her head throb and the world whirled giddily around her. Becca stumbled and almost fell but Truth caught her arm.

"Easy, Rebecca."

"Leave me alone." She jerked away from him and stepped back, putting distance between herself and the two of them. "Just don't...don't touch me for a while."

"We're sorry." Far really *did* look completely remorseful. He still knelt on the grass where he had been cradling her head in his lap, looking at her as though he thought she hated him now. A glance at True showed a similar look. Their expressions made Becca feel bad.

"Look, I'm sorry, guys," she said, taking a deep breath. "But that was...what was that, anyway?"

"I don't know but I've never had a clearer vision," Far said quietly. "I'm sorry if it scared you *mi'now*, but it's probably just a passing dream. Half my visions are, you know."

"No," Truth said flatly. "No, this is going to happen. I don't know how, exactly but I could feel it."

"But...how could such an awful thing really happen?" Becca protested. "I mean, did you see them? Their faces were running like wax and their eyes were *glowing*...They...they looked so *evil*."

"I don't know how it could happen, I only know it's going to." Truth raked a hand through his black hair. "We have to alert the Council. The Unmated Males area isn't safe—we have to sound the alarm. *Now*."

Chapter Four

“Tell me the circumstances of this vision the three of you shared,” Commander Sylvan said frowning.

“The, uh, circumstances were, uh...” Becca found herself stammering and her cheeks heating up. She liked Sophie’s husband a lot, really. He was usually very patient and understanding and she knew from watching him with his twins what a wonderful father he was. But that still didn’t mean that she wanted to explain how she’d suddenly found herself trapped in another hot and heavy sexual fantasy with two men at once—a fantasy that had somehow turned into a nightmare.

“Becca was hit in the head in the parklands around the Sacred Grove,” Far said, taking up the story to her relief. “Truth and I were both trying to tend to her and suddenly we fell into a type of mental joining.”

“Which caused us all to be subjected to *his* insane vision,” Truth growled, frowning at Far.

“I noticed you didn’t object to our earlier shared vision,” Far snapped. “The one where you were finally able to get your hands on Becca as you’ve been itching to do for six solar months.”

“As if you haven’t been trying to get your filthy hands on her too! Don’t lie, Far—I know your true intentions.”

Becca sighed mentally. *And here we go again.* They had worked together so much better in the strange mental fugue the three of them had shared. Though it had been horribly embarrassing, she had to admit she had been relieved not to hear their bickering for a while. Why couldn’t they get along in real life the way they did in the weird dream state?

“So they both had their hands on you at once? On your bare skin?” Kat, who had been visiting Commander Sylvan and Sophie when they came in to talk, spoke up.

Becca’s cheeks got hot again. “Well...yes, in a manner of speaking. I mean, Far was cushioning my head and Truth was down at my feet, propping up my legs. So I guess...yes. Yes, they did.”

Kat frowned. “That’s the way Deep and Lock and I do a joining when we want to do a Seek and Find, but we usually have to be touching a lot more, ah, *intimately* to get such strong results.”

“But we weren’t!” Becca protested, feeling like her face was about to catch on fire it was so hot. “I swear! I mean...”

“Easy, doll...” Kat levered herself off the couch and came to put a hand on her arm. “Nobody’s accusing you. It’s the most natural thing in the world to be between your men when you’re with Twin Kindred.”

“There is nothing natural about what we saw,” Truth growled. “Or in having the lady Rebecca between us. She should be with one of us only—with *me*.”

“I didn’t notice you complaining when we were all in bed together,” Far growled back. “It didn’t seem so wrong to you then to have her between us.”

“That was in a dream state only. In reality I will not share her with anyone—least of all you,” Truth’s pale gray eyes flashed fire at his estranged brother.

Far’s black eyes flashed back, filled with a mixture of hurt and hate. “Then good luck forming a complete bond with her, *Brother*. Everyone knows a Twin Kindred can’t manage that on his own without his twin.”

“Not true,” Truth said shortly. “My father managed it and so will I.”

Kat frowned. “Don’t you mean *fathers*? If you’re Twin Kindred, how did you have only one father, Truth?”

“It’s a long story.” The dark twin turned away. “And it is not what we are here to talk about anyway.”

“Yes. If we could please get back to the subject at hand,” Sylvan said dryly. “You say you saw everyone in the Unmated Males section turning into some kind of...”

“Demons. They looked like some kind of *demons*.” Becca shivered and crossed her arms over her chest protectively.

“All right. And what makes you think this vision was completely and utterly true this time, Far?” Sylvan asked, turning to the light twin. “I know you sometimes have doubts...”

“It was true,” Truth said, unexpectedly backing his brother up. “I felt it as I always do. The vision *will* become reality.” He glared at Far as though it was his fault.

“Don’t look at me like that.” Far glared back. “I don’t *cause* the visions to happen—I only see what the Goddess sends to me.”

“Well, did she send you *how* this is supposed to happen or *when*?” Sylvan sounded exasperated. “Because I can’t lock down the Unmated Males section indefinitely—there would be a riot. I have warriors going about their business, doing their jobs, calling Earth females as mates. I can’t just ask them to quit everything and stay quietly in their rooms for the foreseeable future.”

“Of course you can’t,” Becca said. “But Commander Sylvan, if you had seen what we saw...”

“The Goddess...” Sophia came out of the bedroom where she had been tending to her twins. “Do I hear you say your visions come from the Goddess, Far?”

The light twin nodded, his longish, blond hair brushing his broad shoulders. “I do believe she is the source, yes.”

“Well then...” Sophia looked up at her husband. “Sylvan, who else do we know who has visions from the Goddess?”

“Of course.” Sylvan snapped his fingers. “Nadiah.”

Becca frowned. “Who?”

“She’s Sylvan’s younger cousin,” Kat explained.

“And she has the gift of the Sight,” Sophia said excitedly. “She has visions like Far. Maybe she could help us.”

Sylvan sighed. “Maybe so. I’m not exactly sure of the time on First World right now but perhaps we should give her a call.”

“Good idea, I haven’t talked to her in ages.” Sophia looked excited. “I’m so glad we have a viewscreen in our suite now—it makes things so much easier.”

“Indeed,” Sylvan muttered. He walked over to the far wall of his suite, opposite the fireplace and began punching a call sequence into the keyboard below the large viewscreen mounted there.

“I don’t understand,” Truth objected as they waited for a pick-up on the other end. “Why are you calling some relative of Commander Sylvan’s about the vision Far subjected us to?”

“Oh, so now I *subjected* you to it?” Far glared at his brother.

“Hush you two,” Kat said, frowning. “We’re calling because Nadiah is gifted with the same kind of visions Far has—maybe she can verify what you’re saying.”

“She’s also the mouthpiece of the Goddess on First World,” Sylvan said sternly. “So you would do well to listen to what she has to say. *Both* of you.” He glared meaningfully at both Truth and Far.

who shifted uncomfortably and had the grace to look ashamed of themselves.

Finally, just as Becca was sure that the call wasn't going to be picked up, the viewscreen flickered and a sleepy looking girl with blue-green eyes and a halo of blonde hair appeared.

"H'lo?" she murmured, pulling a white robe around her shoulders. "Sylvan, is that you? What do you want—it's the middle of the night."

"Forgive me for waking you, Nadiah." Sylvan gave her a formal little bow. "But we have a disturbing situation here on the Mother Ship I was hoping to consult with you on."

"All right." Nadiah yawned and ran a hand through her wild blonde hair. "But just keep it down—Rast is still sleeping in the next room."

"We'll be brief and quiet," Sylvan promised. Quickly, he explained the situation—the vision Becca and Truth and Far had all experienced together and the predicament it put him in.

Nadiah frowned. "So you want to know if what they saw is true and if so, what you can do about it?"

"Essentially." Sylvan nodded. "Do you have any thoughts on this?"

"As a matter of fact, I do. Let the ones who had the vision step forward."

"He's the one." Truth planted a hand between his brother's shoulder blades and pushed him forward, none too gently.

Nadiah frowned and for a moment, Becca thought her blue-green eyes got a whole lot greener.

"Even if this male is the one with the Sight, he is not the only one who received the vision."

"Fine." Truth stepped up beside his brother. "Apologies—I too witnessed it."

Nadiah raised an eyebrow. "And..."

Becca swallowed hard and stepped up, making sure to keep plenty of distance between herself and the two huge warriors.

"And me," she said quietly. "I saw it too."

"All right." Finally Nadiah seemed satisfied. "Now, I can sense the tension between you. Are you bonded, the three of you?"

"No!" Truth's eyes blazed.

"No," Far echoed and Becca thought she heard bitterness in his voice.

"We're just...we just happened to be touching each other when the, uh, vision came upon us. Or I guess it came to Far here," Becca nodded at the light twin. "And we happened to share it."

Nadiah frowned at Truth and Far. "But the two of you *are* twins, right? Twin Kindred?"

"We are but we were separated at birth. We grew up...alone." Far's voice was soft...almost longing but Truth appeared not to notice.

"Not that we need each other. We are both only staying aboard the Mother Ship until my lady Becca here picks one of us."

"Picks *one* of you?" Nadiah's face was grave. "Truly, warrior, do you intend to try and take a mate without your brother? To desert the bond the Goddess has given you and disregard her will?"

"There is no bond," Truth said shortly. "Nor do I wish one, Lady."

"And you..." Nadiah turned to Far. "Do you feel the same?"

Far looked away. "I do not wish to be bonded to someone who has no wish to be bonded to me."

"I see." Nadiah nodded and looked down. She was quiet for a long moment—so long Becca was almost tempted to wonder if she had gone back to sleep. Then, suddenly she looked up and her eyes

were a deep, burning green. "I see much, warriors," she said and her voice had an authoritative ring that had been lacking when she had first answered the viewscreen, her eyes heavy with sleep and her hair ruffled and sticking up. "I see a rift between you that must be healed—a bond that must be formed—a wound that must be sealed."

"What? But I don't *want* a bond with Far," Truth growled. "Him or any other male."

"*Be silent!*" Nadiah's voice cracked like a whip. "I am speaking what the Goddess has shown me. You and your twin *must* form a bond if this situation is to be resolved. The fate of the Mother Ship and all those aboard rests upon it."

"Truly?" Far looked at her uncertainly. "But...how could the fates of all aboard be tied to me and my...to me and Truth?"

"Your visions hold the key. When you are bonded they will reveal more than passing shadows," Nadiah said. She looked at both Truth and Far. "Will you receive this onus the Goddess herself has placed upon you?"

"I will if he will," Far said, casting a sidelong glance at Truth.

Truth scowled and looked down at his boots for a long moment. At last he looked up. "I will obey the will of the Goddess," he growled. "But I do *not* like it."

"Very well." Nadiah nodded, as though she was finally satisfied. Then she looked at Becca. "Are you—you—what is your name?"

"Rebecca Malone," Becca said softly.

"Do you realize, Rebecca, that in attempting to choose between the two of these brothers you are subverting the will of the Mother of All Life? Do you understand the harm you are causing to her children?"

"I...I'm sorry." Put on the spot, Becca felt tongue-tied and hot all over. "I just...I was supposed to become a nun. And even though I've given that up I still can't...can't abandon all my beliefs just like that." She snapped her fingers.

"A...nun?" Nadiah frowned.

"Like a priestess—a celibate one," Sophia said helpfully.

"I see." Nadiah nodded. "You serve another deity and I perceive that your service is honorable and true."

"I hope so," Becca said. "I...thought it was, anyway. Until I met Truth and Far. Now I'm just confused. The only thing I *do* know is that I can't be married to two men at once. I just *can't*."

"Very well." Nadiah nodded. "Know this then, novice of another deity, I will respect your attempt to honor your beliefs. The Goddess must ask for your help in bonding these brothers together but when everything is said and done, if you wish to be released of your bonding, she will see that it is done."

Kat gave a little gasp. "But...you can't do that! I mean, you can't promise that. When Deep and Lock and I were trying to break our bond, we had to go all the way to the Scourge home world and use that horribly painful Psychic Knife thingy. It was awful!"

"Nothing is impossible for the Goddess," Nadiah said. "Not even the dissolution of bonds." She looked sad. "Though it grieves her deeply."

Becca took a deep breath. "All right. I believe you. I...I'll do my best to help."

"See that you do." Nadiah's eyes blazed green fire. "The fate of everyone aboard the Mother Ship depends on it. And if you find that you cannot keep the bond you have formed, come to the Sacred Grove and ask any of the priestesses to dissolve it once your task is complete."

“But Nadiah...” Sylvan stepped forward, frowning. “What of the vision? Is it true? Should we be concerned?”

Nadiah nodded. “You should be very concerned. The Goddess has not given me exact times but believe what was foreseen will happen very soon. Institute a curfew and be certain that the unmated males section is secure.” She looked down again and when she looked up, Becca saw that her eyes had gone back to blue-green. “I’m sorry, Sylvan,” she said, her voice sounding hoarse and tired. “That’s all I can tell you.”

“You’ve told me more than enough, mother’s sister’s daughter,” Commander Sylvan said softly. “I am most grateful for your talent and your willingness to commune with the Goddess on our behalf.”

“It’s fine.” Nadiah ran a hand through her hair and sighed. “If that’s all, then I really need to go back to bed. Being so close to the Goddess can be really exhausting.”

“Of course.” Sylvan nodded.

“We’ll call again soon to chat—when it’s daytime on First World,” Sophia promised.

“Nadiah nodded tiredly. “You do that. Now, I’m going back to bed—I’m so tired.” She yawned and before she even finished, the viewscreen flickered and went blank.

“Well...” Becca let out a breath she hadn’t known she was holding. “That was...interesting.”

“It was ridiculous.” Truth scowled. “Why should I have to form a bond with another male in order to save the Mother Ship?”

“Be careful what you say,” Commander Sylvan said sternly. “Are you calling the will of the Mother of All Life ridiculous?”

Truth scowled even harder. “No. But if this Nadiah is so close to the Goddess, why could she not just tell us exactly what the vision meant and how to stop it instead of demanding that Far and I form a completely unnecessary bond?”

“That isn’t how the Goddess works,” Sophia said gently. “And if she wants you to form a bond with your brother then you can bet there’s a good reason for it.”

“I don’t see what that could be,” Truth growled. “And I don’t have any idea how to go about ‘bonding’ with another male. I don’t even know what a bond between males involves.” The look on his face said he wasn’t eager to find out, either.

“Well, maybe I can help there,” Kat said, stepping forward. “How about if the two of you—arrange Becca—” She nodded at Becca and smiled. “Come by my suite tomorrow. I’ll have Lock and Debra talk to you—it’ll be Twin Bonding 101.”

“That sounds...helpful,” Far said slowly.

“Yes, it does, actually.” Becca felt a rush of gratitude for the auburn haired girl. She’d been wondering how in the world she could fulfill her promise to the Goddess. Trust Kat to come up with a practical solution to their problem.

“Great. Right after supper, then. Uh, last meal,” Kat amended, seeing the confusion in Truth and Far’s eyes. “Come to our suite, all three of you.”

“All right,” Becca agreed eagerly.

“I’ll be there,” Far promised. Then all eyes turned to Truth.

He was looking away, a deep scowl etched on his chiseled features.

“Truth?” Commander Sylvan’s voice was deep and dangerously soft. “Remember your promise to the Goddess.”

“I will come,” Truth said at last. Then, his face still fixed in a scowl, he turned abruptly and left.

without another word.

“Wow,” Kat muttered. “Well, he’s *definitely* the dark twin despite those strange, white-gray eyes of his.”

“That he is. I need to go as well.” Far took Becca’s hand and placed a gentle kiss on her knuckle that sent a shiver down her spine. “Until tomorrow, *mi’now*.”

“Good bye,” Becca said softly, giving him a smile. “Don’t worry, we’ll get things worked out somehow.”

“I hope you’re right.” But Far looked troubled as he left, going in the opposite direction Truth had.

“I’m afraid you’ve got your work cut out for you there,” Sophia murmured as they all watched him go. She turned to Becca. “And I’ve never heard of the Goddess offering to *dissolve* a bond once it’s formed! That has to be a first.”

“She respects Becca’s beliefs,” Commander Sylvan said quietly. “The Mother of All Life is a lady—she would never force herself or her ways and laws on someone who does not wish to obey them.”

Becca shifted uncomfortably. “It’s not that I *want* to split them up—it’s just that they’re already split. And being married to two guys at once...my parents are so religious. My mom and dad—especially my dad—he—”

Sylvan held up a hand to stop her. “No one is disrespecting your beliefs, Becca. In fact, I believe the Goddess is going out of her way to honor them. All she asks in return is that you help Truth and Far to bond.”

Kat snorted. “Yeah, that’s *all* she asks. But Truth is so prickly and Far is so aloof you’d have a better chance getting oil and water to mix.”

“Now, Kat-woman,” Sophia said reproachfully. “You know the Goddess wouldn’t have asked Becca to help if it was impossible.”

“Yeah, I know.” Kat sighed and looked at Becca. “Sorry, doll—don’t listen to me—I’m just tired.”

“It’s all right,” Becca said miserably. “You’re right—they’re awful together. And Truth *is* really prickly.”

“He kept going on and on about being bonded to ‘another male.’ Not just Far but ‘another male.’ What do you suppose that means?” Sophia asked thoughtfully.

“Yeah, and how can he only have one father? What exactly happened to separate the two of them in the first place?” Kat demanded.

Becca had to shake her head. “I don’t know. Neither of them much wants to talk about the details of their separation and I don’t like to pry. Maybe...maybe I should have and then we’d know what we were up against.”

“It doesn’t matter what you’re up against—you’re going to be fine,” Kat said firmly. “You better be sure to come to my suite tomorrow. I’ll have *my* guys teach *your* guys how to get along. Okay?”

Becca nodded. “Okay. And thanks, Kat. Thanks all of you.” She nodded at Sophia and Commander Sylvan.

“No, thank *you*, Becca,” he said gravely. “Without the warning you helped Truth and Far provide, we might have been in serious trouble.” He frowned. “We still may be. I need to go see to the Unmated Males section at once. If the black cloud you saw is the catalyst for this transformation, we need to put guards on all the ventilation ducts for the entire area.” Turning, he left the suite at a swif-

pace.

“Well...” Sophia clapped her hands. “That just leaves us girls. Anyone want a snack? I think I have some of Lauren’s homemade brownies left. She brought them by the other day.”

“What?” Kat asked. “How in the world does she have time to cook when she's about to pop?”

Sophia shrugged. “You know Lauren—baking is like therapy to her.”

“Therapy I can sink my teeth into. Let’s go—lead on to the brownies.” Kat smiled enthusiastically.

“Great.” Sophie turned to Becca. “And how about you? You want a brownie?”

“No thank you.” Becca sighed and crossed her arms over her chest protectively. “I seem to have lost my appetite. I think...I think I just want to go back to my suite and rest. Maybe take a soak in the bathing pool.”

“Oh, of course, hon.” Sophia patted her arm sympathetically. “I understand. Just go try to take it easy. Don’t even *think* of those two until tomorrow.”

Becca promised she wouldn’t but as she left, she knew she couldn’t keep her word. How could she help thinking about Truth and Far...and what she had promised to do to help them?

Chapter Five

As the Black Planet grew larger in his viewscreen, Donald K. Mahoney, PhD grew more and more impatient. There it was—an entire planet made of pure Titanium Dioxide. It was superheated to scorching temperature almost as hot as the surface of the sun it orbited. At such extreme conditions, shouldn't have been able to survive at all. Yet, here it was, appearing in his viewscreen like a fiend made of black ice.

Not that any ice could form at such extreme temperatures. Donald snickered to himself at the little joke. Indeed, the extreme temperatures kept the planet from forming even ammonia clouds which could have reflected incoming radiation—the result was that the Black Planet absorbed 99% of all heat and light it received and reflected back only 1%. Truly, it was a strange phenomenon, one Donald was eager to study.

Of course he had no plans to actually step onto the surface—that would be instant suicide. But the Kindred ship he was flying was a scientific vessel which meant it had the ability to collect long range specimens. And Donald needed a *lot* of specimens.

A ton or so of the shadow stone should do it, the dark voice that had been speaking in his brain lately whispered. It must be pulverized...then refined and turned into dust. What is left will be pure evil.

Yes, Donald had equipment that could do that. Absently he scratched the black mole at the base of his right thumb. Actually, it really couldn't be called a mole anymore—it was more like a patch that covered most of his hand. Donald kept meaning to get it checked out but there were always more important things to tend to.

Like harvesting the shadow stone.

Soon, crooned the voice in his head. Soon the entire Mother Ship will be ours. And then they will pay. All of them will pay...

Yes. Donald liked the sound of that. The image of Maggie's new paramour—that ridiculous muscle-bound Kindred called Kor—rose in his mind's eye. He had taken Maggie away but worse, he had *changed* her. She had been the perfect fit for Donald—running errands, organizing her transportation, complying with his schedule without complaint—before Kor had come into her life. Now she was a changed woman and not for the better, in Donald's estimation.

You shall have her back, promised the dark voice. All shall be exactly as it was.

Good. Donald nodded to himself and nudged his ship closer to the planet he was orbiting. *That's all I want—for everything to go back to normal.* And if Kor happened to meet an untimely demise, well, he wasn't opposed to that either.

Everything would be fine if he listened to the dark voice. Somehow, Donald was certain of that.

He scratched the black growth covering his right hand absently and prepared to lower the collection arm.

It was time to begin.

Chapter Six

Truth paused a long moment before knocking on the dull silver door that led to the suite of Commanders Deep and Lock and their bride, Lady Kat. He didn't *want* to be here. In fact, every fiber of his being rebelled at what he was being forced to do.

A male doesn't mate with another male and he doesn't share a female with another either. It's sick—perverted.

His years growing up in the Rai'ku colony on Pax had taught him that. The Rai'ku were a proud people with noble traditions and unbending ideas about what was right and wrong. Truth's father had upheld those traditions and ideas and taught Truth to do the same. In fact, the only reason he had agreed to come to the Mother Ship when Far first found and contacted him was from a simple sense of curiosity.

He had heard much of the Kindred growing up—there were several other warriors besides his father in the colony. A Blood Kindred and two Beast Kindred who fit in especially well. Truth had often wished he was Beast Kindred—their savage temperament meant they adapted best to life among the Rai'ku. Even the Blood Kindred did well because of his fangs. But what did Truth have to show for his heritage? Nothing but a missing twin and an absent bond—a bond which would be considered a disgrace among the Rai'ku.

And now he was being ordered to join in such a bond. What would the warriors on his home colony think of him? How could he ever show his face again if he was forced to bring a male bondmate back with him—if he could even bear the shame well enough to return?

Truth didn't know and he didn't want to find out. But along with everything else, his father had taught him respect for the Goddess. It was she who guided every warrior's life from the cradle to the grave. Truth didn't feel he could ignore her orders, even though they seemed completely wrong to him.

With a deep sigh, he squared his shoulders and knocked on the door. He would honor his promise or at least *try* to. What else could he do?

* * * * *

Far turned his head to watch as the door slid open, admitting his twin. As always when he saw Truth, his heart thumped painfully. Their features were so much alike it was like looking into a mirror—except for the hair and eye color, that was.

Far could still remember his extreme joy at seeing his long lost twin. His elation at finding the brother he had longed for, for so many painful, lonely years was a reality, not just a figment of his overactive imagination.

He remembered well their first meeting. It had been in an agreed upon location in the parkland just outside the Sacred Grove. Far had not been able to restrain himself when he saw the other male—he had thrown his arms around Truth, pulling him close, hungry for contact with the brother he had lost at birth.

And Truth had pushed him roughly away.

“What's wrong with you?” he'd spat, glaring at Far. “A male does not touch another male in such

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