

H I H

By Phoenix Rafael
prafael@myprivacy.ca

Edited by: Winter & Rilbur

June, 2009

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 2.5 Canada License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.5/ca/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 171 Second Street, Suite 300, San Francisco, California, 94105, USA.

Disclaimer: If it is illegal to read this where you are, then don't read it. This story is completely fictional. Any similarities to any persons or events, past or present is purely coincidental.

www.phoenix-writing.com

Chapter Ten

*If I could reach the stars I'd pull one down for you
Shine it on my heart so you could see the truth
That this love I have inside is everything it seems
But for now I find it's only in my dreams*

*That I can change the world
I would be the sunlight in your universe
You will think my love was really something good
Baby if I could change the world*

*If I could be king even for a day
I'd take you as my queen I'd have it no other way
And our love will rule in this kingdom we have made
Till then I'd be a fool wishin' for the day*

*That I can change the world
I would be the sunlight in your universe
You will think my love was really something good
Baby if I could change the world
Baby if I could change the world*

- Change the World, by Eric Clapton

I walked into a store at the local mall. It was a jewelery store, and had lots of beautiful gold jewelery. Two of my protection detail were standing nearby, but not being obtrusive.

A girl walked over to the counter I was at. She raised an eyebrow at the guards, but didn't say anything. "Is there something I can help you with?"

I nodded. "I want a platinum engagement ring for a guy. With a nice square diamond in the centre, and it has to be big to represent status."

The girl lead me over to another counter, and unlocked a door. She pulled out a nice square platinum ring. It had a black inlay on which a large square diamond sat. I took the ring and held it for a few moments, "Yes, this will do fine." I put the ring back on the counter.

"This ring is 25,000 takHse. We take all major credit cards" the girl explained.

I looked over to Captain Shepard. "Mr. Killerguy never told me how to pay for stuff."

Captain Shepard walked over to me. He got out a black American Express card. He put it on the counter. "This is your credit card, your highness. Only Earth uses them, so you won't need them anywhere else. It has no limit, so don't worry about reaching it."

The girl blinked for a moment, like a deer caught in headlights, but then took the card and processed my transaction. After I signed the receipt, I put my new card into my wallet, and took the bag the girl offered me. "Thank you."

"Anytime, your highness." The girl sure did catch on quick.

Outside the store, Captain Shepard stopped us. He looked around a moment. "It's all clear. If I may ask, what's the ring for?"

I looked over at the blue guard. "I'm going to propose to Peter. I've know him since I was 4 years old, and I turn 18 next week. If I do become the Pharaoh, I'm going to need a strong Queen. I love him, Shepard."

Shepard smiled. "That's good to hear, your highness. Um... if you don't mind, when we get back to the safe house, would it be okay if I spent some more time with Mike? I mean... General Huntington's son, I mean..."

I raised my hand for him to stop. "I know who you mean. Why don't you bring him over, I'll invite Peter and Susan, and we'll all hang out like we did before all this Regent business started."

Shepard stiffened at that idea. "Oh, but I can't. It would be improper for me to..."

I raised my hand again. "If I'm going to learn to trust you, Shepard you're going to have to spend some time with me, and it's not going to always be while I'm performing duties in public. If we become friends as a result of it, great. If not, well at least we can say we tried."

Shepard looked at me and relaxed a little. "When did you become so wise, your highness?"

I narrowed my eyes now. "When we're talking privately Shepard, please call me Alexander. I'm starting to really hate being called 'your highness'. It wears thin after a while."

Peter always loved it when we just relaxed and hung out with our friends. He felt it was the time when he was truly himself. He didn't have to wear any masks, or have to put on any sort of performance because it was expected of him. With Peter, Susan, I and now Mike we all trusted each other enough to be ourselves. Our true selves.

Shepard had arrived with Mike shortly after six o'clock. The safe house was in an out of the way neighbourhood, so they had to drive. Once they got here, Peter ordered pizza for everyone, and we just sat around and chatted until it arrived.

For an alien, Shepard was a cool guy. He had pretty human qualities, and he quickly fit in. You could see the wonderful loving dynamic between him and Mike. It was as if they were meant to be together.

After we were done the pizza, Peter put on a movie. It wasn't anything special, but it did the trick. About half way through, I paused it. "How about we take a bathroom break?"

Everyone agreed. I quietly went up to my bedroom and got the ring box out of my sock drawer. I had to hide it because sometimes Peter would come up here with me. I didn't want to ruin the surprise.

I walked downstairs, and sat back on the couch. Everyone started returning from either the bathroom, or the kitchen. Drinks were in hand, and we were almost ready to start again.

I put my hand on Peter's knee, and stood up from the couch to face him. I hadn't told anyone my plans, and only Shepard knew that I had a ring. This was the perfect opportunity, and I wasn't going to let it go to waste.

I got down on one knee, and looked Peter in the eye. "Sweetheart, I love you. You are everything to me. My life, my soul, my very existence." I got out the ring box, and brought it up to eye level. I opened it. "Peter, will you marry me?"

The doors opened to a larger chamber. I looked around a little. Trumpets blared, and the crier shouted, "His Imperial Highness, the Crown Prince in his capacity as Regent of the Empire!"

I walked down the long red and gold carpet, and as I walked by the audience members bowed. I stepped up to the platform, turned, and then sat down in the large, red, plush throne. Peter and I had travelled to Rigel Prime, as a case was pending before the Royal Court. I looked over to the Chief Conservator, who was like a prosecutor. On the other side was the defendant's Nestor, who is like a defence lawyer.

In the Royal Court, the finding of guilt or innocence is announced at the beginning, along with the sentence. The purpose of the trial is to show how the court came to the conclusions that it arrived at. Some member worlds also used this system, and some others used other systems. It could be confusing.

“Sharon Burgess you stand charged with one count of high treason, one count of attempted murder, and one count of attempting to subvert an Imperial investigation.” I started to announce the findings. “You have been found guilty on all charges, the sentence is 200 years of hard labour. How do you plead?”

I had allowed the Chief Conservator the leeway to seek a plea bargain if she would tell us who had hired her, and so forth. I had a feeling whomever hired her was linked to what happened to my parents, and I wanted them more than I wanted her dead.

Luckily, she agreed. She told Imperial Intelligence everything they needed and wanted to know. She wasn't a very good agent, it wasn't hard to get her to talk at all, even without the deal.

“Guilty, your highness.” Sharon spoke in a soft voice, she had been defeated. She still looked plain, but in the orange jumpsuit of a prisoner, she looked... pale. Her strawberry blond hair no longer stood out.

“Guilty!” I called out and banged my gavel. “Chief Conservator, you have something you wish to say?”

The man nodded. He was like a giant bird, sort of like the incompetent lawyer in the reruns of *Futurama*. “Yes, your highness. The accused has cooperated very well with two ongoing cases, and has provided credible information. We asked that you take leniency in sentencing.”

I nodded a little. “Do the Nestor and Chief Conservator have a recommended sentence?”

The Nestor stepped forward. “Yes, your honour. The defence asks for the death penalty. It would be far more humane for my client than a long term in a hard labour colony.”

The Chief Conservator nodded. “I concur with the Nestor, your highness.”

I leaned back a little, and considered what they were saying. I looked at Sharon, and just thought what I would want if I were ever in her shoes. I banged my gavel. “The sentence is death. Sentence to be carried out immediately.”

Two guards took Sharon out of the chamber, and she would be taken out and shot. Her ashes would be returned to her parents in Vancouver. It was a pity really. She was a nice girl, she just got in with the wrong crowd.

I looked over to my clerk. “Is there any other business before us?”

She only shook her head. "No, your highness. We are done for the day."

I stood, and walked down the long aisle, and out of the audience chamber. I was tired, but I'd rest on my way back to Earth. I wanted to see my Dad, even if he was still asleep. It's too bad it's two days one way.

The RSS Agamemnon wasn't the biggest ship that the Imperial Guard (the military) had, but it was the fastest. Most of the public areas were well lit, and had bright coloured carpeting, or paint on the panelling. It was quite spacious.

The suite I had been given was fit for a King. I suppose that's why they gave it to me. I personally found it too lavish, and tried to argue with Colonel Blood that it was far too extravagant for my use. However, she informed me that there were no other quarters available during our voyage.

Although there were replicators to get food from in all of the quarters, most of the crew met in the mess hall for their meals. The Imperial Guard tended to be a social creature for some reason, and the crews liked getting together for camaraderie. So I made my way to the mess hall just before a real dinner was about to be served.

I could have dined with the Captain and her senior officers in the Captain's Mess, but I was still adjusting to the whole Crown Prince thing, and I felt out of place. So after getting a plate of food from the buffet, I found a nice empty table and took a seat. I was the only one in the room who wasn't wearing a uniform.

But I wasn't the only human in the room. This was a positive thing for me. Peter had decided to stay back in the suite to get some rest. He'd decided to take a guided tour of the capital city before we left, and now he was all tuckered out. His loss, I suppose. Oh, and if you're wondering, he said yes.

I took a bite of my food. It seemed to taste a lot like swedish meatballs. Whatever, I just kept eating. The taste wasn't pretty irrelevant right now, I was famished and I'd probably be getting two more servings before I even considered dessert. Oh yes, dessert. They had strawberry ice cream. My favourite.

A shorter man around my own height in uniform came over and sat down at my table. This wouldn't be uncommon as many tables had filled up. I just focused on eating my food. At least he was human, not that I objected to any of the personnel on the ship. Apparently I could have anyone reassigned if I didn't feel safe with them around.

When I had finished my meatballs, I sat back a little and watched the man sitting across from me. He was eating the exact same thing, and drinking the exact same thing. It's not like there were many choices. But he did seem vaguely familiar.