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B E B O K I A
The Hidden Planet

Nadja's Insanity

Soren was in his quarters lifting weights to the rhythm of music. He was just beginning his evening routine which also included bath, dinner and a little reading before bedtime.

Although the Nest offered many after work activities, he seldom went out. Other than Everly, he didn't have many friends. Her absence was a great strain on him because almost instantly and without warning, he had taken her place as best advisor.

He could deal with Nadja disliking him but there was an ominous change in her that made him afraid. She was now like a ghost, cold, aloof, and obsessively preoccupied with the Prophet's prediction of her losing her rule to twins. Even her appearance had changed. Her complexion was paler, she had become painfully thin, and her hair went unkept. Everyone noticed, but no one took it upon themselves to confront her. Everly would have surely said something, done something, but she was no longer there to protect him or anyone else from Nadja. He missed the buffer that she had provided but most of all he missed her as a friend.

Soren had romanticized the idea of travel to a far away planet and imagined a host of adventures experiencing new or dangerous things, so his heart nearly skipped a beat when he heard a beeping noise coming from the transport box. While his perception rang true, the contents of the little black box was a big disappointment. There was no indication of adventure, no sign of new things, just a small vial of dirt with an unexciting note which read, "Dirt sample. Full report on our return home".

After a restless night's sleep, Soren found himself standing before Nadja in the privacy of her quarters. He was nervous; he was always nervous in her presence.

"Everly has sent us a message" he began.

"Why did it take her so long to contact us" Nadja asked.

"I don't know because her message was short. In her condition, she may have been pressed for time." He handed Nadja both the dirt sample and note. She examined the dirt with curiosity before responding.

"See that this vial gets to Tayna. . . and Oh" she asked in a by-the-way manner "What exactly did you mean by 'in her condition' ?

“My Empress, Everly had very little time to plan for her trip” Soren said thinking quickly. He realized that he had made a mistake in alluding to the fact that Everly was pregnant. He was not sure of this himself and even he was, would never put Everly in danger.

“For centuries no one has visited Earth” he continued. She is venturing into practically unknown territory. Her journey is bound to be a little chaotic and a lot scary. Time for correspondence is probably a little scarce.

Nadja nodded and Soren was happy that he could finally leave, but despite his effort to cover his mistake, Nadja had become suspicious and fearful of Everly.

The hovering cube was sleeping. Nadja paced around the conference room table where it as hanging before finally deciding to activate it.

“Prophet of past present and future tell me what I must know.” The Prophet glowed and as it became brighter the light began to flicker.

“My Empress, what is it that you wish to know?”

“Who are these twins you speak of that will take my place as Empress?”

“My Emprss, there can be only one Empress or Emperor. Twin rulers could never be.”

Nadja felt relieved and happy with the Prophet’s answer.

“So, you were mistaken when you predicted that twins would take my place?”

“No, My Empress, what I said was twins will end your rule.”

Nadja’s heart sank even deeper than it had before. She was struck with a ball of negative emotions with anger being its momentum. She began to yell question after question at the Prophet not giving him sufficient time to answer.

“Who are these twins? Where are they from? Are they even born yet? Who are their parents? What are their names?”

The Prophet was silent and appeared to shut itself off. As Nadja began to leave it said, “My Empress, they are close.”

Without looking back, she stopped for second but then continued on her way.

Nadja wondered why she had agreed to a day at the Nest spa with her sister Seeru. She was in no mood for beauty treatments when everything around her was crumbling. Her throne was

in danger but no one cared. She thought about canceling, but that just didn't feel right. It wasn't very Empress-like.

"Shoradomy Nadja, It's been too long." Seeru was genuinely happy to see Nadja and gave her a big hug.

"Shoradomy, Seeru, it has been way too long. You're looking great" Nadja particular noticed that her sister had gained a substantial amount of weight.

"Wow, so this is your private spa... it's beautiful. I should have invited myself here sooner."

"Yes, it really is beautiful and you are welcome here any time you want. It's a shame that I don't have time to come here more often."

"Nadja, the Epress can do anything she wants. You can make time."

"You are so right; it's good to be Empress."

"It's good to be related to the Empress." They both enjoyed a hearty laugh.

"Let me give you a tour. We're obviously standing in the pool area. If you stand right here you can activate the warm bubbles. It stops by itself after about fifteen minutes. Standing right here turns on the waterfall at the opposite end of the pool."

"Oovestic! Let me try." Seeru was in awe.

"Down a little further is the sauna and massage area. I can call my masseuse if you want a massage, she's absolutely fantastic."

"Masseuse? Why don't you have masseur?"

"Why Seeru, I'm the Empress. What would people think?"

"They would think, it's good to be Empress."

"Very funny" Nadja giggled. "Seriously, would you like a massage?"

"Maybe next time, right now I'd just like to enjoy our company."

They walked past the sauna and entered another section of the spa.

"In this area you can get your face, hair, hands, and feet beautified. Your hairline could use a little shave back. Your forehead has gotten so small."

"I know. Would you mind sculpting my hairline like we did when we were little?"

"I wouldn't mind at all, that's why we're both here, right? For a day of beauty and relaxation. Have a seat."

Nadja made small talk while she sharpened and sterilized the oversized blade.

"So, anything interesting happen that you want to gossip about."

“No, everything is pretty routine. The children are growing up so nicely. The other day little Sasson asked me if Zeban was going to be her father. That was very odd. She doesn’t remember Leem but she was very small when...”

“When Leem had that unfortunate accident.” Nadja said finishing Seeru’s sentence. “Who’s Zeban?” She gently began to shave Seeru’s hairline.

“Naja, I told you that I was dating Zeban. Don’t you remember? He’s been a great help to me and the children adore him.”

Nadja had no recollection of ever hearing about Zeban.

“Oh yes, Zeban. Do you plan to have children with him?” She wanted to find out if Seeru was already in the motherly way. Naja’s thoughts rested on what the Prophet said, ‘they are close’. What did he mean by close? Close in relation or close in proximity?

She began to design zigzag patterns into Seeru’s hairline.

“Nadja, I already have three children, but I wouldn’t mind having two more. They’re growing up so fast.”

“Two more?”

“Ouch!” Seeru yelled.

“Oh, I’m so sorry. I’ll be more careful with the blade.”

A bit of blood ran down Seeru’s forehead but Nadja wiped it away with a towel before it reached her eyes.

“These things happen. I’m Okay.”

“I’m almost done.”

Nadja cleaned the blade close to Seeru’s neck and thought, ‘How easy it would be to slit her throat, but that would be too messy. So much blood in my beautiful spa – out of the question.’

“There, all done. Do you like it?” She held a mirror in front of Seeru.

“Pretty. I remember you had such elegant zags. What happened to them? Would you like me to put them back in?”

“No, I’ve decided to go natural. It’s much easier and I just don’t have the energy anymore to keep up with the latest zags.”

Seeru looked at Nadja lovingly and wasn’t sure if was allowed to say what was in her head. Nadja hadn’t just gone natural, she had stopped grooming completely. Also, by the looks of how thin she was, she was not getting enough nutrition. She wanted to help her sister with her apparent problem but fear of insulting the Empress held her back.

“I have a surprise for you” Nadja said, interrupting Seeru’s loving gaze.

“Uh oh, last time I heard that, I was locked in a tiny room and tortured with mind piercing noise.”

Nadja laughed at the awkward joke, which really wasn't a joke.

“Oh Seeru, you'll like this surprise. I had my chef brew you up his special cocktail that he calls galactic bliss. He made a whole bottle of it for you and I'm hoping that you'll share with me.

Nadja led Seeru to another section of the spa that was used for quiet reading. It had two cozy couches and a small table where the aforementioned cocktail was already sitting along with two regal glasses and Seeru's favorite confection, purpurloon.

“Nadja, you didn't have to go through all this trouble.” Seeru was overwhelmed by her kindness.

“We don't see each other often. I just wanted to show you how much I appreciate being your sister.”

Seeru embraced her sister. “Ya kuzaden pon wah, my Empress.” During the embrace she could feel exactly how slender Nadja had become. “You should eat a little more” she added.

They sat, drank, nibbled on purpurloon and chatted for hours. Nadja made sure that Seeru's glass was filled with galactic bliss but was careful to only take small sips of her own glass.

“Wow, look at that, we drank the whole bottle” Seeru laughed for no reason at all. She was so drunk that she almost fell out of her chair.

“You must get your chef to give me the recipe for galactic bliss; that was delicious” Seeru said with a drunken giggle.

“My chef isn't known for his generosity with recipes but I will try. Do you know what we need?”

“What's that?”

“We both could use some time in the sauna. It purifies the body, right down to the soul.”

“Sounds delightful, but I'm going to need some help walking.”

Nadja laughed contagiously and Seeru was infected almost immediately. She laughed so hard that tears ran down her cheeks.

The Empress helped Seeru to the sauna and they both enjoyed the steam. Seeru was unfortunately so drunk that she didn't realize how much danger she was in. The amount of alcohol that she consumed plus a hot steamy room equaled her imminent death. The heat made her sleepy and her heart beat gradually slowed down.

After Seeru fell asleep, Nadja checked her pulse at regular intervals until she had none.

She loved her sister but she loved her crown just a little more. In her mind it was not a crime to protect what was hers and she had concluded that her crown was worth protecting at all costs.

“I’ll miss you sweet sister” she whispered with a hint of remorse.

Soren could hardly take his eyes off Seeru as she lay limp and half naked in the sauna. Nadja had called him to clean up the mess.

“She’s dead” said Nadja while he checked if Seeru was still breathing.

“My Empress, what happened?”

“I don’t know. One minute she was there and then... she fell asleep. I mean, I thought she was sleeping.” Nadja had a blank expression on her face.

“I’m so very sorry” Soren said feeling bad that he ever had loathsome feelings towards her.

“Is there anything I can do?”

“Summon two of the best High Guards to my quarters and make sure they are masters at what they do.”

“Does this have anything to do with Seeru’s death, my Empress?”

“Don’t let the why concern you, Advisor.”

“Yes, my Empress.”

Soren was now mad at himself for his recent moment of sympathy for Nadja, but he did feel sorry for Seeru. He had a sinking feeling about the situation and his inner ear told him that things were amiss.

A hushed suspicion rapidly spread through the Nest as it was abuzz with news of Seeru’s untimely death. Flowers of obligation were placed outside of Nadja’s door. Her subject feared her and Soren could no longer look the other way. He wrote to Everly warning her of the possible danger. The High Guards was just a fancy name for trained killers and Nadja, in her state, could not be trusted.

The leaves of the tallest Earthian trees were greedy but unsuccessful in their attempt to block the summer sunshine from nourishing the bottom of the forest. Rays of sunlight broke through their barrier feeding the smaller plants which, in turn, were food for small animals.

Mandar roamed the woods, indulging in the warm light whenever he could. His white fur was a blinding contrast with the lush green of the plants. Now that the snow had melted and the trees were clothed, hunting was more of a challenge. He could no longer depend on Mother Nature to camouflage him and was forced to rely on his own ability which would cost precious energy.

His attention was pulled by a stir in the bushes. The unsuspecting animal, whatever it was, was too far away and too busy to recognize danger. Mandar moved with the stealth of a ghost towards his pray. Once he was within the threshold of the animal's sight, he exchanged his lovely white fur for a lush green coat. Only the cold blue of his eyes gave him away while he stood frozen waiting for the right opportunity to pounce on his victim.

His patience was rewarded and soon a fat rabbit, oblivious of his presence, scurried toward him in search of more food. He was just meters away from Mandar before he sensed that he was being watched but it was too late to avoid the chase.

The rabbit saw a tree with a deathly stare move towards him, so he dashed with celerity the other way. Mandar, now transformed back into his magnificent white coat, was in pursuit. The rabbit, running in an odd half circle, lead him into a clearing. Mandar tried to cut off his path by running in a straight line but instead ran into something hard. The force of the impact left him stunned. He tried to see what he had crashed into but there was nothing there; all he saw was forest. Cautiously, he walked toward the invisible entity that ruined his hunt until he touched it with his head—it was cold and smooth. He stood back straining his eyes to see the inanimate object that was standing in the middle of the clearing.

What Mandar could also not see was that within the cloaked shuttle, the soft blinking light of the transport box waited for a message to be received. He eventually gave up and walked back into the woods, perplexed, defeated and hungry.

GLOSSARY

amushtar – congratulations

bamek – Bebokian currency

binaborx – giggling deer-like creature

flingtus – a cactus that can throw its needles

fuke – Bebokian curse word

growkish – nasty or unpleasant

halistag – Bebokian horse

Morstarga – hostile alien planet

nevotar – good luck

nissyput – weakling or coward

oovestic – great or cool

pamooky – silly

protovisor – the advisor's understudy

purpurloon – a sweet candy like confection

shastoik – crazy

shoradomy – hello

smarzicon – precious Bebokian gem used in jewelry

Ya kuzadem pon – I love you

Ya kuzadem pon wah – I love you too

zorpkusfly – Bebokian flying insect that has healing powers.