

# Surrendering for Two (Soul Match Book 4)

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Surrendering for Two

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Soul Match

SURRENDERING FOR TWO

Morticia Knight

*Book four in the Soul Match series*

Strength is found when surrendering to destiny.

Graham has suffered way too much at the hands of the Nall. Ever since he was enslaved after the invasion, he's been raped and tortured by the Alasharian Supreme Commander and his cohorts. Condemned to die by hanging for his part in the human rebellion, Graham gives in to the inevitable, no longer caring if he lives or dies. But an unexpected event occurs and, at the last moment, Graham is saved.

Balor is a guard to the Nall, but he's also a part of the growing rebellion among the Alasharians. When one of the Nall's advisors enlists his help in getting a human prisoner to safety, Balor comes to his aid. Startled by the soul match hum that sparks to life when he touches Graham, but unable to do anything about it, Balor is determined to protect his human match at all costs. When Advisor Oman arrives on the scene to rescue Balor as he helps Graham to escape, it becomes clear that yet another alien/human triad is forming—even if Graham may never accept being bonded to two aliens after the trauma he's endured at the hands of Alasharians.

The time has come to depart to the secret military complex where the human and Alasharian allies will stage their final assault against the Nall and the Void. Families are reunited and others torn

apart as they prepare for battle. The allies fear what will become of them all if Chris, the special human Sha Sha Ar has chosen as their spiritual leader, is no longer there to guide them.

## Trademarks Acknowledgement

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Millers: The Miller Brewing Company—Molson Coors

## Chapter One

Graham huddled with his dad and brother on the warm concrete surface of the desert park's amphitheater. Their hands were bound in front of them with a thick, scratchy rope and a curtain separated them from the stage where whatever preparations were being made for the show that was about to take place. *Show? Our execution.* He pressed his lips together, stifling the cry that threatened to burst out. It amazed him how he could still be shocked or terrified by the actions of the sadistic monsters who had taken over Earth.

*It's better this way. Better that I die.*

Ever since he'd been captured during the initial invasion, his existence had been nothing but a series of events that had kept him in a constant state of fear, had scarred his body or had fucked with his head. The aliens who had conquered their planet were too strong—they'd easily beaten down the Earth's military forces in less than a month. What point was there in continuing as one of their sex slaves? And anyway, now that he'd been recaptured for being a part of the human rebellion, his sentence had been made clear.

*Death by hanging.*

He peered up at his brother, Paul. As he gazed into his petrified eyes, Graham wished he could have somehow saved him and their dad. They'd never given up on their resolve to take back the planet. By comparison, Graham was weak. Once he'd gotten away from the aliens the first time, he hadn't wanted to fight anyone. He'd begged them to leave the city with him, to find somewhere in the wilderness where they could live in safety and peace. His father had taken him by the shoulders, had shaken him and destroyed what little hope he'd had left when he'd told him that such a thing wasn't possible.

*'That's where they captured so many of the others, in the foothills, far from anything. We barely escaped the round-ups there. We can't hide anymore, not for good. We take back what is ours however we can, no matter the cost.'*

Graham swallowed hard, his heartbeat picking up a quicker pace at the sounds of a crowd forming, the noise building on the other side of the divider as it became obvious that he and what remained of his family were drawing closer to the end. Graham sniffed, glancing at their surroundings. Three huge Alasharian guards watched over them as he, his brother and his father awaited their fate. The *Nall*—the Alasharian version of their king, as Graham had come to discover—was likely due to arrive at any moment. Why else would they have been removed from their cages and brought to the Palm Desert Civic Center Park, then had their clothing ripped from their bodies right before their wrists had been tied together?

Graham couldn't hold back a sneer as he caught the eye of one of their guards. The alien's large eyes darkened, narrowing in clear anger. He didn't give a shit. Beaten to a pulp or strangled by a rope, it hardly made a difference. As he continued to stare down the guard, he noted that the sparkling, prismatic quality of the Alasharian's eyes that he'd found fascinating when he'd first been captured had seemed to dull as time had gone on. *At least for some of them. Strange.*

Paul and his dad had managed to evade capture for a while and they'd never been used as sex slaves. Graham was glad that at least they'd been spared that humiliation. From what he'd been able to ascertain after his capture, his brother or father wouldn't have met the criteria as an alien sex toy anyway. All the human men and women he'd seen at the cages, or after he'd been sent to the *Nall's* residence, had been smaller and slender. The type of human sex slave they seemed to prefer ran contrary to the build of the large, muscular aliens.

Paul nudged Graham in the side with his elbow. Graham had sort of drifted in his mind. The horrors of what he'd been enduring over the past few weeks wouldn't release their hellish grasp on his thoughts. He made himself focus on his brother, his eyebrows raised in question. They'd both been smacked across the face the last time they'd tried to speak to each other.

It was difficult to get into a comfortable—or even reasonably non-painful—position, so they'd been using each other as support. Graham laid his head on Paul's shoulder, angling it to one side to be as close to his brother's lips as possible. Paul's breath blew past the shell of his ear as he whispered, "We need a diversion. Something to distract them so we can get away."

Graham closed his eyes, sighing. His first instinct was to just shake his head then leave it at that. But he couldn't. He'd seen the anguish in Paul's expression, knew his brother wasn't ready to die. *He* might have given up, but Paul hadn't. He owed it to him to at least try.

Graham cleared his throat softly, turned his head more until his face was almost buried in the side of Paul's neck. "How?"

Paul whispered again, "You're the closest to the curtain. If we keep shifting like we're adjusting our positions, but continue moving in that direction, once you get to the point where you can yank it

down—”

“Quiet!”

Graham cried out in pain as a guard’s boot connected with his ribs. He instinctively curled into a ball to protect himself while Paul was backhanded by a different one. His dad yelled out for them to stop and Graham watched in horror as his father was punched so hard by the third Alasharian that blood gushed from his nose before he slumped onto his side.

“Dad!” Paul rose on his knees and was smacked again. He landed with a grunt on top of their father, and they both struggled together, raising their tied wrists in front of their faces to fend off more blows the best that they could.

“*Halon!*”

Graham gasped, rolling away from the tussle, shocked at the outburst from the female Alasharian who had rushed in waving her arms before shoving at the guards. *Maybe she doesn’t want us too damaged for the show.* He recognized her as one of the aliens who would show up at the *Nall’s* residence then disappear with him into another room with similarly-attired aliens. They would all wear the same bland, beige robes, a stark contrast against the *Nall’s* grander ones. Graham assumed she had to be part of their government in some capacity.

His move had caused him to become separated from his brother and dad so that the guards and the female alien stood between them as they argued over something he couldn’t understand. He found himself on the outer edge of the backstage area, with a grassy expanse of the park extending beyond the amphitheater toward the college. He gazed at it with longing, his heart beating high in his throat, the idea of freedom a tease that his mind had latched on to. Graham licked his lips then turned back to the confusion. *Not without Paul and Dad.*

The female rushed toward him and he cringed. One of the guards grabbed her shoulder right before she reached him and she whirled around, punching her fellow Alasharian hard in the face. The alien’s head snapped back and he flew into the two other guards, knocking them down. Paul cried out and Graham stretched his neck to see what had happened, but all that was visible was a confusing mass of alien and human bodies flailing on the ground.

Graham squeaked as the female yanked him up by his upper arm. She got right in his face, growling through clenched teeth.

“Run! Get out of here. *Now!*”

“Wha...?” He shook his head in confusion, his body shaking uncontrollably from the adrenaline coursing through his veins. “But...my brother, father...”

“I’ll get them, but you have to run right now. It will create more of a distraction if they go after you, but you have to *go!*”

She shoved him away from her right as another guard who had surged to his feet grabbed her in a chokehold. She jerked her head back, whacking him hard with her skull, and their grappling began anew. Graham stumbled down the two small steps, landing on his knees and sucking in a sharp breath from the sting of his flesh where it had been scraped away. The chaos of shouting and fighting echoed behind him, but he didn’t stop to look. *Run. Now. A distraction.*

Graham used his elbows and restrained hands to propel himself upward and scrambled to his feet,

running as far and fast from the amphitheater as he could, not daring to glance over his shoulder. The stretch of grass behind the concrete structure was thankfully free of the Alasharian crowds. A line of bushes along the sidewalk next to a grouping of trees seemed as if it would be a great place to hide while he caught his breath and assessed who might be after him. *I don't want to lose Paul or Dad either. They'll be coming this way any minute.*

He dove into the cluster of trees, ignoring the scratchy hedges tearing at his skin while he squinted toward the direction he'd come from. *It's too dark.* While there had been plenty of light near the large gathering, the rest of the vast area was only illuminated by the occasional streetlamp shining along the roads that wound between the college and park. He wiped at the sweat that ran in rivulets down his face using his forearms. *Have to get this fucking rope off somehow.*

Right as he began to ponder why the female alien would want to help them, he was grabbed from behind, a large hand covering his mouth before he'd even had the chance to scream. He was held tightly against the massive form of the alien who had captured him. He fought with all that was in him, kicking backwards, jabbing with his elbows as he tried to twist his body free.

*"Hush! We don't want them to catch us."*

*Us?*

The male Alasharian's hot breath burned next to his ear, the deep timbre of his voice barely above a whisper. Graham had stilled from the pure shock of the alien's words. Two aliens. So far *two* aliens had tried to help him within the span of a few minutes. He couldn't reconcile the truth of it in his head.

Graham recoiled as the alien nuzzled his neck, a low purring noise rumbling from deep within the Alasharian's chest. *I fucking knew it. Disgusting pigs, all of them!* His struggles began again, but he found himself also fighting against an odd sensation building under his skin. It was discomfiting and he couldn't place the source. *Electricity?* Even as Graham thought it, he knew he had to be wrong. It made no sense.

His body went rigid as shouting drew near. Undoubtedly, it was the guards from the amphitheater. He trembled, his eyes filling with tears. *Where's Paul and Dad?*

*"Shh. We'll stay here until they're gone."*

*I'm not going with you to be your plaything, you sick asshole.*

It was the only explanation that seemed plausible. Why else would the mysterious alien be helping him?

The threat seemed to pass and the alien's hold on him relaxed a bit. He seized the opportunity to begin his frantic thrashing once more.

*"Stop it!"* The alien growled. *"I'm trying to save you. You need to get away from here as quickly as possible, they'll be giving this location a thorough search. I'm taking my hand away so I can cut these restraints off, but you must be quiet. Understand?"*

Graham nodded the best he could.

*"Good. Be still."*

The alien turned him around, but still gripped his upper arms. He'd drawn his eyebrows together in what seemed to be confusion and his gaze roamed Graham's face as he openly studied him. *What the fuck?* It occurred to him that the alien might just be curious—or repulsed—by the horrific scarring on the left side of his face. Yet another gift the aliens had been so kind to give him.

The electrical sensation, like a hum under his skin, had taken on a sharper edge and it was beginning to freak him out a little. Graham also found himself drawn to the Alasharian male's silver blue eyes. Their pale brilliance was a stark contrast to the alien's sienna brown skin and long bunches of black hair—a stunning combination that had Graham strangely captivated by a creature who belonged to a race of beings he despised. He tilted his head. *Odd. They're not dull like the other guards were either.*

"I..." The alien appeared uncomfortable, almost as if he were in pain. "I can't protect you, not in the way I wish. Please forgive me."

*Duh. Why does he think I expect him to protect me? "I don't understand why you're helping me."*

Graham let out a sharp gasp, recoiling the moment the alien yanked a large knife from a sheath attached to his belt. The alien tightened his hold on Graham with his other hand.

"Do not fear me. This is only to cut the bonds on your wrists."

Graham exhaled, the sound loud to his ears. The alien's thin lips were pressed together, his frown deepening as he sawed through the thick rope. He mumbled something in the Alasharian language. Whatever it was, he didn't sound very pleased. Graham contemplated the situation. He couldn't imagine that the alien wanted anything other than sex from him, but if he could leverage that to get Paul and his Dad freed, he thought he could stomach it one more time.

He tamped down his emotions, the ones telling him that if the female Alasharian had been successful at saving his brother and father, they would have been there already. A burst of light in the direction of the amphitheater startled him and the roar of the crowd grew in response. Soon, it would be too late to do anything if they were still being held captive. *If she somehow failed to free them in time.*

"T-thank you." It made him somewhat nauseated to say it. He was still convinced his helper was nothing more than a sadistic monster driven by his basest urges. "I'm very grateful. I was thinking..." *Oh God.* "Since you helped me, could you maybe help my brother and father? They were being held with me, and I'm so afraid for them, that they didn't get away. But I'll do anything, *anything* if you can do something to save them too."

The alien regarded him with compassion as he tugged the sliced bits of rope free from Graham's wrists. Or maybe the expression was actually pity. It had to be pity, since when he thought about it, the night he'd escaped the first time he'd been due to go to some pleasure party the *Nall* had planned, the one that Paul and his dad had been a part of bombing. It was how he'd found them. The chaos had given him the opportunity to slip away and the fact that they were there had allowed them to be reunited. He'd been sure he would die that night.

The *Nall* and some of those closest to him got a thrill out of torture, and their subjects who they chose to be rid of tended to be the humans who were no longer physically appealing. Graham had long gone past the point of being pleasing. He was an ugly, disfigured thing. In addition to the one side of his face, his back was a hideous tapestry of deep scars, some still pink from not having yet fully healed. The strength of the Alasharians in wielding their methods of pain was impressive. More than once, he had simply fainted from the agony, only to be roused to endure more. The

alien staring back at him, the only one who could possibly save what remained of his family, was unlikely to be interested in any of his sexual favors. He dropped his head so the alien couldn't see the tears which he could no longer control.

He tensed as the alien pulled him into an embrace. Too shocked to react, he merely froze.

"I'm sorry, so very sorry. I would do anything for you if I could, but it's not within my power to do this that you ask."

*I'm going crazy.* The hum had changed into something more, something heavier and all-encompassing, almost as if it were alive and surrounding him and the alien in a cocoon of warmth and safety.

"No!" He shoved at the alien, fighting from within and without to tear himself free from whatever insanity was gripping him.

"Shh! They'll hear you!"

The alien shook him and it brought him back to an awareness of his surroundings.

"You have to get away, there's no more time to waste. I was wrong to linger, to..."

This time, Graham could see the clear anguish coming from the alien, and it was as though he could *feel* the other being's pain. *Also crazy.* "I don't understand what's happening!"

The alien glanced over his shoulder, his own fear building as he imagined he could sense the being's emotions. He turned back to Graham, moving nearer until they were almost nose to nose. Graham sucked in a sharp gasp. *I don't want to be so close to him, I don't!*

"There's no time to explain, brave human." He gritted his teeth and the fear Graham sensed turned to frustration. "Tell me your name."

*What the fuck?* "I...uh..." He frowned. "Graham."

He nodded as though it meant something. "I promise to find you again. But now you must run, Graham. Run and hide until the crowds have dispersed."

Graham blinked in confusion, but before he could respond to the alien's words, he was shoved away as the alien leapt to his feet. He squirmed through the other side of the hedge, ignoring the scratches to his skin as the stiff branches clawed at him. Grateful that he had the use of his hands again, he was easily able to rise from the ground then scurry in the direction of the college. Nothing seemed to be going on there and most of the buildings had been reduced to rubble, anyway. He would conceal himself in the wreckage of one of them, the same way he'd been hiding with the rebels all along.

Graham stayed as close to the cover of the bushes and palms as he could, only darting into the open when he had no choice while skirting the edges of the duck ponds. At the sound of loud voices, he dashed behind a palm tree, flattening himself against the spiky bark. He closed his eyes, willing his breathing to slow as he attempted to locate the source of the voices. They were close enough that he didn't dare take off running again. He waited, listening—gauging whether he should chance leaving the cover of the tree yet.

After a few more minutes and more loud exchanges, the aliens seemed to be moving away from

his location. He could've sworn he recognized the voice of the Alasharian who had rescued him. But of course, that was ridiculous.

Graham inhaled deeply as if he were about to dive underwater then tore across the rest of the lawn until he hit the sidewalk. The soles of his feet were rough and calloused, a result of being without shoes and living outside during his brief bout of freedom, so the detritus left over from the invasion, the hot gravel of the parking lots or the heated asphalt didn't bother him.

He had just made it to the parking lot next to a baseball field, and was headed to the main campus where he planned to hide in one of the half-destroyed buildings, when other voices from behind him drew closer. One even sounded human, so he held on to the vain hope that the friendly alien had rescued either his brother or dad.

*Friendly?* He gave himself a derisive snort. *Not in a million years.*

More than likely, whoever was approaching him were enemies and the human was their slave. Regardless, he wouldn't be able to make it to the campus in time without being discovered. He crouched behind one of the many vehicles the aliens had probably used to travel to the park. They were all either trucks or SUVs with some of them modified by having the roofs removed.

The voices drew even closer. *Dammit.* He no longer had any choice other than to crawl underneath a vehicle to hide. *And hope to hell it isn't the one they'll be using.* He pressed his lips together as the gravel crunched under their feet right next to him. *Just as I suspected. Two aliens, one human.* There was a fifty-fifty chance the truck they were about to use was the one he'd concealed himself under.

*Fuck!* The human stepped on his hand, letting out a surprised yelp. Graham instinctively yanked it away, but it was too late. He'd been caught.

## Chapter Two

Balor rushed toward his fellow guards, hoping to fend them off long enough so that Graham could get away. *Graham.* He couldn't stop and ponder what had just happened between them, there was too much at stake.

He waved his arms above his head, shouting, "Over here! I saw a human running free!"

The guards whipped their heads around. *Yes, look at me, you filth.* It had become less painful to think of his fellow Alasharians with disdain than it once had. All it had taken to forever rid him of any guilt over his disgust at his own kind was the glee he'd witnessed so many of them express over the torture of humans at the pleasure party. As the guards approached, he noted that the eyes of the two Alasharians had taken on the dull cast that he'd first noticed with the *Nall*, but had become more prevalent with others as of late. He checked his own eyes every morning to verify that whatever poison had seeped into once good Alasharians hadn't taken hold of him, too.

*Had they really been good?* Or had there always been something lurking inside that had only

surfaced once the Void had taken them over.

He still had so many questions, but his sister—who had been the one to alert him that an Alasharian-led rebellion was about to take place—had assured him that many of his questions would eventually be answered.

*Chris.* He needed to meet the human who *Sha Sha Ar*, their Supreme Soul Healer, had aligned with. He wasn't sure if he believed that there was such a special human, or if his existence was only rumor, but he *did* know that the evil of the Void existed. That he had sadly witnessed one time too many, and he wouldn't stand for it.

He swallowed hard as the guards drew closer. *I'll soon have the chance to see for myself if this special human exists.* The simple code word of 'Chris' had appeared on his communicator a parcel of time earlier, forwarded by his sister. He hoped that she'd been able to leave the *Nall's* residence—where she worked as the executive overseer of the Supreme Commander and his family's cuisine—and was already making her way to the ships.

"Where have you been?" One of the dull-eyed aliens growled at him.

Balor cleared his throat as an uneasy thought struck him. *Soon, we won't be able to hide from those who have succumbed to the Void. It will be clear from our eyes.* "I saw a human running in this direction, so I chased him. But he got away." Balor pointed toward the large building at the front of the park that remained partially standing. It was located on the other side of the amphitheater and opposite the direction from where Graham had been headed. "He's probably seeking shelter there."

One of his fellow guards narrowed his gaze. "Then why are you standing here by the largest of the three pools of water?" The guard, whose name he couldn't recall, exchanged glances with the other.

"Indeed," the second guard remarked. "If he were headed toward that structure, why didn't you follow him there? Our longer strides have never failed to overtake a small human before."

Shouts and cries rent the air. Some had the quality of celebration while others seemed to emanate from terror. The abrupt cacophony diverted their attention and Balor feared that it signaled the beginning of a historic battle. *Heavens. Everything is falling apart.*

The original guard sneered at him. "The festivities have almost concluded and we'll have our hides handed to us if we don't recover the escaped human."

The second one let out a chuckle that filled Balor with nausea. "And once we recover him, the *Nall* will take delight in his slow, painful death. Perhaps we will be rewarded for his capture and be allowed to watch!"

They nodded in unison, their lips twisted in an unsettling leer. Balor forced down the bile that had begun to climb in his throat even as he fought against his fury. *They dare not touch Graham or I'll rip them to shreds!* The vehemence of his anger startled him. It went beyond the disgust he felt in general over the change in so many of his fellow beings. *Graham and I belong to each other.*

Something must have shown in his expression as they both stared at him with scorn painted on their features. He'd be of no help to Graham or anyone else if he didn't keep up the charade.

Balor spoke with the true rage he felt, "It angers me that the human has gotten away! We *must* find

him.”

The first guard jerked his chin toward the college campus. “Then this is the area we will search.”

*No. Not yet!* “As you wish.” He pointed in the direction where he’d originally hoped to lead them. “One of us should head over there though, just in case.” If it became necessary to protect Graham, it would be easier to overtake only one guard instead of two.

The first guard responded. “Then *you* go. That’s where you thought he went, correct?”

“Yes, but...” His thoughts raced as he struggled to find a logical response as to why he couldn’t go that way. “I want to be in on the capture too!” He summoned the ugliest growl and expression he could manage. “I’d hate to miss out on the *Nall* tearing him limb from limb.” He shuddered from the emotions the sickening thought sparked.

The first guard huffed. “Fine. Then we all go in the same direction, but we’re wasting time! We go *now*.”

Balor gave a quick nod and darted toward the campus, doing his best to remain in the lead in case Graham was discovered and he had to fight for him. Some of those in attendance were leaving, and he had the impression that it was the unpoisoned Alasharians who couldn’t stand the gruesome display any longer. What would happen to his own kind if they resisted those who had been consumed by the Void? He knew the answer, knew they were on the brink of a revolution, but it was still difficult for him to fathom how everything had fallen apart so quickly.

As they trotted along, his unwanted companions flanking him on either side, Balor thanked the stars that complete darkness had taken over. Any advantage that provided Graham with more opportunity to escape was something for him to be grateful for.

They reached the edge of the lot where many of the attendees had parked their vehicles and Balor scanned the area, terrified that they might spot Graham before he did. The crumbling remains of the buildings that had once been part of a place of learning for humans would make excellent cover, so he had to believe that Graham was safely tucked away in one. *But they could still locate him*. He pressed his lips together, his hand on his light beam shooter in case he needed to draw against the guards.

The first guard spoke, “The human could be under one of these vehicles.” He checked his belt, frowning before giving the second guard a small shove. “Give me your illuminator. I don’t have mine.”

A small squabble broke out between them over how stupid the first one had been not to have his illuminator with the other one barking at him over his refusal to share his light stick. It was another aspect of the change in some of the Alasharians—petty arguments over things that had never mattered in the past. Balor took the opportunity to squat down and check under the vehicles while they were distracted.

An engine that was clearly human-made roared to life. Balor straightened, squinting in the dim light toward the source of the noise. He could have sworn that he spotted two humans climb into a truck. His breath hitched, terror building inside him at the thought that Graham had been snatched by other Alasharians.

A shrill siren blared, a signal that had traditionally been used as a warning back on Alashar when they were about to be attacked by a hostile race. It was the first time he’d heard it since the last

war that had been fought on his home planet. It hadn't been needed for the invasion since *they* were the ones who had been the hostile race when they'd attacked Earth.

They all froze, the three of them equal in their confusion. Balor's attention was grabbed by the vehicle he'd noticed moments before as it burst out of the parking lot after crashing through other trucks and landing with a bounce onto the pitted, grassy area. It careened wildly, dodging the open craters in the turf while racing toward the street.

Two simultaneous growls from his fellow guards caused Balor to whip his head toward them. They were gazing down at their palms, frowning at the communicator they held there. Balor sucked in a sharp breath. He tensed as he gripped his weapon tighter. Whatever message they'd received, he hadn't. His communicator hadn't vibrated in notification. *It's begun.*

They both slowly raised their heads, scowling at him with their lips curled in fury. Balor ducked, falling to the ground and rolling behind the cover of a truck, the superheated stream of light from the first guard's shooter singeing one of his long tufts of hair. Balor aimed for the second guard, taking him out before he'd even had the chance to draw, the concentrated ray of light searing him completely through. He was dead before he hit the ground.

A howl of rage erupted from the first guard and sparks ricocheted off the hunks of metal he'd taken refuge behind, sections of them melting away where the beam had been the strongest. Balor rolled again, away from where he'd taken refuge, swiftly moving to the other side of the vehicle. He sucked in a breath, raising his shooter to fire when the first guard whirled around, his own weapon drawn. A searing pain erupted in Balor's shoulder and he dropped his light beam. He then launched forward, tackling the guard low to keep from being hit again. They both landed hard, their breath forced from their bodies before they continued their battle.

They clutched and snarled at each other, fighting for dominance as they struggled on the ground. The guard straddled him and Balor wrapped his thighs around his enemy, holding him in place so he could wrench one arm free, delivering as many solid blows to the side of his face as he could. The guard head-butted him and stars danced in his eyes. *No!* A punch to his jaw caused him to bite down on his tongue and he tasted blood.

With a roar, he shoved the guard onto his back, regaining the advantage so he could grab him by the throat then slam his head repeatedly on the ground. *He was once an ally, a proud Alasharian sworn to protect our race. I was sworn to do the same.* The errant thought gave his enemy the opening he needed and he rammed his knee in Balor's groin. Balor grimaced from the pain, his breath knocked from him as he screwed his eyes shut, tears sprouting behind the lids.

Balor let out a loud grunt as something heavy landed on top of him. He was still clutching his sac so his hands were pinned against his body. He bucked at the weight, fighting back with all the might that he could. He couldn't suck in enough air, and right as he checked to see what had almost suffocated him, he found himself being gazed down on by Advisor Oman. He was close enough to Oman's face that he could detect that the Alasharian he'd held secret feelings for still retained the sparkling blue-green qualities to his eyes that he'd always admired from afar.

Oman shoved the lifeless body of the first guard off Balor, his neck clearly broken judging from the odd angle in which his head lolled. *His strength is more impressive than I'd realized.* Oman then offered his hand in help. Balor waved it away, not wanting to shame himself by appearing weak. He'd already needed Oman to save him from the guard as it was. *He's not a fighter anymore, yet I couldn't defend myself.* Balor had been trying to think of a way to get to know the advisor, but that had been prior to the invasion. He was no longer one of the guards who would protect the *Nall* like he'd been back on Alashar in the Supreme Commander's palace. He'd despaired of ever having the

chance to interact with Oman again.

*And yet fate brought him here when I needed him the most.*

He was being ungrateful and that was even worse than appearing weak to the handsome advisor. "Forgive me, Advisor Oman. I am filled with appreciation for your help." He gave a small bow of his head, an indication of his respect.

Oman smirked. "You are forgiven, Balor. But we must hurry. Already the *Nall* has sent the attack signal to our former allies to annihilate us all—Alasharians and humans alike." Oman frowned as he regarded him and Balor tracked his gaze to where the beam had nicked his shoulder.

"Oh, it's nothing, Advisor Oman." Even though his skin stung from the hit it had taken, he could tell it hadn't gone deep.

Oman narrowed his eyes, then gave a quick nod. "Fine. But the moment we are settled on the craft that will carry us to safety, I will attend to your injury."

"That won't be necessary. I don't wish to trouble you."

Oman let out a huff. "We'll discuss it later. For now, we have the impending battle with the *Nall* to worry about."

Balor furrowed his brow as it all slipped into place. "The code, 'Chris'. I received it not long ago." He held Oman's gaze. "And what about the human, Graham? I tried to help him get away as Advisor Amara had instructed, but..." His heart clutched in his chest. "But I'm not sure if he was recaptured or not."

"That's the name of the human who was able to escape being executed?"

Balor nodded.

The sorrow in Oman's eyes told him what he'd already suspected. "Graham's family did not make it, I'm afraid."

"Then what happened to Advisor Amara?"

Oman's brow wrinkled and he shook his head, his grief apparent.

"Dearest heavens, no. How? Why?"

"She was hanged on stage the way Graham's family was, and the way he would have been too had it not been for her intervening when she did. It was a punishment for trying to save them." Oman locked eyes with him. "We fight back, Balor. We fight against this insidious Void that has corrupted our fellow Alasharians. The humans will help, and together we will eradicate the pestilence that has turned Alasharians against one another." Oman pointed toward the rubble that Balor had instructed Graham to hide in. "I left a human vehicle on the other side of that wreckage so I could escape with whomever I could find."

"But...what about Graham? I can't leave him!"

Oman tilted his head as if processing what Balor had just said. He only realized after it was too late how strange it must have sounded. Not only was he willing to risk himself over a human slave, but

he'd been clearly distraught over Graham's potential fate.

"He has special meaning to you?"

"I... Yes. He does. I don't know why, but he does." Oman had just told him they would be fighting alongside the humans, hadn't he?

Oman continued to stare at him to the point that he became uncomfortable. Finally, he broke his silence. "I didn't realize that was his name. Advisor Hallosh contacted me a few mini-parcels of time ago as he and *Rahna* Rama were making their escape. Hallosh informed me that they had recovered a human familiar to their match. He was hiding here with the vehicles. Based on that, I surmised you and the other guards had headed this way."

Balor let out a relieved sigh. *That was him then.*

"Let's go. We'll be reunited with Graham soon."

Oman picked up a brisk jog and Balor fell in behind him. He still had so many questions. How did Oman know he was worth being saved? Had he come to the same conclusion about the darkening of the Alasharian's eyes that he had? *And his assumption that I wanted to be reunited with Graham...* He frowned as they darted around and jumped over large chunks of rubble that had piled up from the obliterated structures. *Not just that I wanted to be reunited. Oman said 'we'.*

They reached a lone SUV—as Balor had learned they were called—cleverly hidden between two partially destroyed buildings. Oman smacked the long expanse of metal that covered the front of Earth vehicles as he reached the driver's side door. "Jump in! Our allies are waiting."

He obeyed Oman's orders, settling in the front seat next to the advisor, Oman's robe-covered thigh almost touching his somewhat exposed one due to the lack of space in the truck. The guard's attire he wore was the traditional jock and short skirt that allowed for freedom of movement, his torso covered only with a sheer tank top and his armor plate. Crisscrossing his chest were *basha* leather straps that held his light beam shooter on one hip and his knife on the other.

Balor glanced to his side as Oman let out small curses, the operation of the vehicle seemingly not one of his strengths. At last, it jerked forward, the wheels screeching as they zigzagged around more chunks of debris in order to escape to the streets. Fortunately, most of the human roads had been cleared to keep traffic moving once Alasharians had claimed victory over Earth.

Balor couldn't stop himself from observing Oman as they bounced and jostled toward their destination.

The corner of Oman's mouth tugged into a smile. "I've been watching you too, Balor. There wasn't time to approach you before the invasion."

*Oh.* "I didn't want to overstep my bounds or I would have said something sooner as well."

"I believe now the moment is right." He peered at Balor briefly before returning his eyes to the road. "Had we been in the clutches of a new match while the invasion was in progress, it would've been too dangerous for you since your strength would have been needed to fight."

Balor snorted. "Although it didn't make much difference just now."

Oman let out a low growl. "Stop that. I won't have any *Nasha* of mine tearing himself down."

Oman's previous remark about them being in the thrall of a new match sunk in. Balor's eyes rounded. "Match? *Nasha?*" \*

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## FROM BESTSELLING AUTHOR MORTICIA KNIGHT

### Book four in the Soul Match series!

*Strength is found when surrendering to destiny.*

Graham has suffered way too much at the hands of the *Nall*. Ever since he was enslaved after the invasion, he's been raped and tortured by the Alasharian Supreme Commander and his cohorts. Condemned to die by hanging for his part in the human rebellion, Graham gives in to the inevitable, no longer caring if he lives or dies. But an unexpected event occurs and, at the last moment, Graham is saved.

Balor is a guard to the *Nall*, but he's also a part of the growing rebellion among the Alasharians. When one of the *Nall*'s advisors enlists his help in getting a human prisoner to safety, Balor comes to his aid. Startled by the soul match hum that sparks to life when he touches Graham, but unable to do anything about it, Balor is determined to protect his human match at all costs. When Advisor Oman arrives on the scene to rescue Balor as he helps Graham to escape, it becomes clear that yet another alien/human triad is forming; even if Graham may never accept being bonded to two aliens after the trauma he's endured at the hands of Alasharians.

The time has come to depart to the secret military complex where the human and Alasharian allies will stage their final assault against the *Nall* and the Void. Families are reunited and others torn apart as they prepare for battle. The allies fear what will become of them all if Chris, the special human *Sha Sha Ar* has chosen as their spiritual leader, is no longer there to guide them.

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