

# ENDLESS



**Warning:** *The following excerpt is unedited. Typos and grammatical errors galore.*

**Double Warning:** *Since this is rough-draft material, the scene I'm sharing with you may or may not end up in the final book...if the story even makes it to publication.*

**Triple Warning:** *Sorry, I don't really have a third warning; I'm just a goofball who wanted to write "triple warning." It's so fun! Anyway, enjoy the excerpt!*

# CHAPTER 1

## CAPTAIN VALENTINE CHARGER

“You’re going to be punished for it. You know that, right?”

The question made my lips twitch with amusement as I continued down the hall. “There would’ve been no fun in it without the threat of reprimand.”

“This isn’t amusing, Val.” Behind me, Penn’s footsteps increased speed in order to keep up with my stride as he dogged my heels. “Commander Hegel hates you. Since coming into power, he’s been looking for any excuse to get rid of you, and you just...you *handed* him one on a silver platter.”

I slowed to a stop and turned to face the most loyal friend I’d ever—or could ever—have. “We saved an entire planet.” I patted the outsides of both his arms. “Millions of lives, Penn, *spared* because of what we did. Why don’t you focus on that?” When I turned away, he groaned.

“You are so stubborn.”

I shrugged.

So Hegel had expressly forbidden us to get involved in Barclay’s problems. They would’ve been overtaken completely within a week by the Insurgent’s invasion if we hadn’t, and it’d taken us little enough effort to lend a helping hand, plus we’d lost none of our own. Besides, we were against anything to do

with the Insurgence. Why *shouldn't* we have helped our neighbors in their greatest time of need?

"It's a little hard to concentrate on the good when we've just put our own asses on the line." When I ignored his concern, he stopped walking and called, "He's not his father, Valentine."

With a groan of impatience, I tipped my head back and growled up at the row of lights crowning the domed ceiling of the tunnel. Finally, I turned back. Penn would probably follow me all the way home if I didn't calm his nerves.

"Relax, will you? What's the worst thing he'll do? If he touches either of us, the entire fleet will revolt. Hegel may be weak and stupid, but he's also a coward. He wouldn't dare risk the wrath of his own army by eliminating its two top warriors."

Penn lifted a dark eyebrow. "*Two* top warriors, huh?" When he grinned, I sighed and rolled my eyes. He still teased me mercilessly because I'd been given an award for my duties with a ceremony, preceding a dance and dinner afterward, because he knew I hated anything to do with pomp and circumstance.

Gritting my teeth at the reminder of my elite status, I scowled but insisted, "Yes. Two top warriors. We're a pair, you and I. And I assure you, no harm will come to either of us because of this."

When I reached out and squeezed his shoulder, he finally blew out a breath and muttered, "I hope you're right."

"I am. Now, would you stop pestering me already? I have a wife I haven't seen in two weeks."

His shoulders fell as he grumbled out a goodbye and waved me off. But as soon as I turned away again, he called, "You know, sometimes I get the feeling you prefer that woman over me."

I grinned. Not bothering to glance back, I tossed back, "Might have something to do with the fact she's a hell of a lot prettier than you first thing in the morning."

"Debatable," he returned.

I laughed outright and shook my head. Feeling good and free and victorious after a well-fought, well-won battle, I rolled my shoulders and forgot about Penn, ready to focus on one thing and one thing only. Home...or rather, who was *at* home.

When I exited the tunnel and entered the heat of the night, both moons were full in the sky, the green one slightly larger than the more-distant red moon. It was a good night for loving the fortunes always said. I was certainly willing to fulfill that prophecy.

Already anticipating how my wife would look asleep in our bed after I peeled a single sheet off her, her soft skin sparkling in the reflection of the two moons, I hurried my pace, eager to be with her. She hated to wear clothes to sleep when it was hot like this; she'd no doubt be naked under the covers.

At least, I hoped she was asleep when I got there. Watching the slumberous, sensual way she woke was one of my favorite pastimes. My cock stirred in my trousers, growing hungry. He sensed she was near as well.

My transport pod was where I'd left it outside the base. I slid inside and turned on my favorite type of music before typing in the coordinates for my dwelling. As the engine boosters lifted the pod off the ground, I settled my head back into my seat and closed my eyes, thinking about the night to come.

If she'd missed me half as much as I'd missed her, neither of us would get much rest in the coming hours. I smiled and shook my head, already craving her enthusiasm at my return. No one was ever as happy to see me as she was. Watching her face light up whenever she caught sight of me was like a drug. I'd never get enough of her.

As the pod slowed, I lifted my head and opened my eyes to take in my dwelling. But the blinking flood of emergency lights and armed guards surrounding it had me sitting up in alarm and glancing around wildly. "What the..." I popped open the hatch and leaped to the ground before the pod came to a complete halt and settled back to the ground. "What's going on here?"

My worries immediately went to her. Was she hurt? Threatened? Alive?

My answer came as the soldiers parted to let the green-caped figure through. He marched toward me with his irritatingly familiar swagger and his silver spiked helmet tucked under one black-gloved arm.

My lips curled with disgust. "Making house calls now, Commander?"

As he slowed to a stop before me, he said a single word. "Captain."

I bowed my head quickly, as any captain was supposed to do to his commander. But when I straightened, my civility wavered with a suspicious frown. "While your visit is an honor," I said slowly, "you needn't have bothered. I planned to meet with you first thing in the morning for my scheduled debriefing."

Hegel narrowed beady black eyes at me as he jerked to a stiff halt in front of me. "You disobeyed a direct command, Charger."

I dipped respectfully, though showing this weasel any kind of respect tasted like ash in my mouth. "And in doing so, I believe I followed another direct command you gave my fleet."

Hegel's head twitched as if he couldn't compute my words before he tilted his chin to the side and said, "Which command was that?"

"Why, to oppose the Insurgence at all cost, my Lord."

This time, the commander took to blinking rapidly, unable to readily crack back a response.

I sent him a catty smile. "Isn't that what you instructed us? To defeat the Insurgence? At all cost?"

"Yes, but...I also instructed you not to involve yourself in Barclay's civil war. And you expressly—"

"Obeyed," I finished for him. When he scowled, I smiled. "I didn't bother myself with their civil war at all. In fact, it's still

taking place as far as I know. I only kept them from being invaded by an outside—”

“I wanted you to stay away from their planet completely.”

“Oh,” I said simply. “Well, that’s not what you said. You said—”

“And you will cease arguing with me this instant.”

I clapped my mouth shut and eyed him frostily. He scowled right back. When a sudden smirk lit his lips, a feeling of unease washed over me. It finally struck me as peculiar that we were at my dwelling and they’d been here for quite some time before I’d arrived, lights flashing and men everywhere.

With all the commotion, why hadn’t my wife noticed anything and come outside to investigate? My gaze darted toward the entrance of my dwelling, worry inflaming my chest.

Where was she?

“The fact of the matter was you *knew* I didn’t want you to do what you did, but you did it anyway,” Hegel was saying, his voice dripping with self-important bullshit.

But I was too busy frowning at my dwelling, wondering where—

“So I was forced to punish you in the only way I knew I could get your attention.”

Punish me?

My gaze darted among the soldiers. The ones who could meet my gaze looked sad, apologetic. Guilty.

I turned back to Hegel, snarling, "What did you do?"

He smiled. "You tied my hands this time, Valentine." Clucking his tongue, he shook his head in disappointment. "Disobeying a direct command like that? Well, I couldn't just...let it go. And yet I can't strip you of your status either. I'd lose my army's allegiance."

"What did you *do*?" I roared. "Where's my wife?"

Chuckling as if pleased I'd caught on to his ploy, he pointed at me. "Ah, you're a quick one, knowing *she'd* be the price you had to pay for your insubordination."

"I swear to God, Hegel—" When I stepped threateningly toward him, two soldier baring laser blasters slid between us, protecting him.

Betraying little bastards.

I jerked to a stop, glared at them, then transferred my attention to Hegel. "If you touched her..."

Laughing outright, Hegel threw his head back like a giddy school girl. "Oh, never fear. She's quite unharmed, I assure you. She remains a very healthy, beautiful woman. Stunning really. You were lucky to have her for as long as you did."

Did?

I shook my head, not understanding. If he meant to take her from me and keep her for himself, I'd see him dead first. *She* would see him dead first. I didn't care how many soldiers I took with me or wars I started. No one could keep us apart.



Just then, the front doors to my dwelling burst open and six soldiers exited, carrying an opaque mirrored container. Knowing she must be in there, I surged forward, only for a dozen soldiers to step in front of me, keeping me from my wife. I roared and struggled against them, but they grabbed my arms.

After I slammed together the two idiots who'd been clinging to me, I kicked a third in the throat and turned to a fourth. Five more men piled onto my back, tackling me to the ground.

I cursed and raged, struggling and taking out a few more, only for them to be replaced with others.

"What are you doing to her?" I demanded of Hegel, lifting my head from the hard, relentless earth. "Where are you taking her?"

The commander sent me a giddy grin and slid on his helmet. "Put in her in the transport," he instructed the men carrying the container.

"Hegel!" I shouted, trying to push to my feet with no avail. "I'll just find her. Send her away to the furthest reaches of the galaxy, but I'll still find her. And she'll find me. You can't keep us apart."

Hegel turned to me, smirking. "That's where you're wrong, Captain. She won't find you. She won't even remember you."

I sinking feeling swamped my gut. My vision blurred and throat dried to dust. Shaking my head, I gaped at Hegel in horror. "You didn't."

With a laugh, he said, “Wiped her mind clean? Oh yes... I did. She has no memory of you whatsoever.” He chuckled again. “She has no memory of anything, anymore.”

My head swayed back in forth in disbelief. Mind wipes were only forms of extreme capital punishment for traitors and murderers. The love of my life had never even broken a traffic law.

“But since you mentioned sending her off into the farthest reaches of the galaxy, I believe I’ll do that too.” Hegel winked at me. “Just for good measure. Thanks for the suggestion.”

Straining against the hands holding me down, I watched the mirrored container being lifted into the back of the transport. I hadn’t even been allowed to say goodbye or see her one last time.

Two soldiers shut the doors of the transport, hiding the cargo was wife was being held in. Unable to believe this was happening, I began to tremble, more afraid than I’d ever been in my life.

The transport started to move away, and something inside my chest snapped, splintered, then fragmenting to particles.

I was lost.

Throwing back my head, I bellowed, “NOOOO!”