

Maybe it was a coincidence. Maybe he wasn't here for her.

The dark-haired man inhaled and scanned the room with his eyes. His irises caught the light, reflecting it with an amber glow for a split second.

The fragile hope in Maud's chest died. Not a human. A werewolf, a refugee from a dead planet. No home to go back to. Like her.

The towering cloaked figure headed for the bar. The werewolf followed. A third person trailed them, wearing a tattered grey gray robe. The cut of the robe was achingly familiar. It looked like an innkeeper robe.

*You're imagining things*, Maud told herself. *It's a grey gray robe*. There were millions of them in the Galaxy. It was the simplest and most common garment, second only to a cloak. In the end, all colors faded to greygray.

The robed traveler took a seat at the bar. The bartender took the order and came back with two cups. T and came back with two small cups. The larger man didn't drink. Instead, he half-turned to and watched the room, blocking Maud's view of the robed traveller.

*Move, you oath.*

The larger man showed no signs of moving. She couldn't see his face from where she sat, but she recognized the particular way his cloak bulged. A vampire in full armor.

A few moments passed. The raiders sized them up. A quiet communication was taking place between the large dark-haired raider who had to be the leader and the rest. Anticipation hummed through the room like a low-voltage current.

**Commented [S1]:** Per OFS, after Dina gets her tea she takes down her hood to show who she is, though here it happens later

The raider leader rose and casually moved back, giving himself room for a charge, resting his hand on the big blood hammer at his waist. Almost simultaneously, the largest raider, his face ruined by a deep scar, got to his feet and lumbered toward the bar.

“Stay close to me,” Maud whispered and squeezed Helen’s hand.

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-She started moving before she even realized it.

-Nuan Cee pushed off his pillow and took three steps toward Maud. She barely registered the honor. She reached him and they hugged.

“There you are, Matilda,” the Merchant said.

Somehow, she found her voice. “Yes.”

They broke apart.

“And who is this?” Nuan Cee widened his turquoise eyes.

“This is my daughter, Helen.”

The lees let out a collective *squee*.

“She is so cute!”

“Look at her hair!”

“Look at her little boots!”

Helen stood in the whirlwind of lees, looking slightly freaked out, like a cat greeted by a pack of overly enthusiastic little dogs.

“I am Nuan ~~Nan~~Ama,” the lees who found them announced. “Come with me. We have the best sweets.”

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**Commented [S2]:** Not sure if this matters but in Sweep in Peace Clan Ama is listed as a different clan from the Nuans, so it might be confusing

Maud **hids** a smile as the lees dragged Helen to the nearest table and thrust a dish of candy under her nose.

“Have you seen your sister?” Nuan Cee asked.

“Yes. She is all grown up.”

“And an innkeeper!” Nuan Cee raised his hands. “Who would have thought?”

Maud laughed. It was that or crying.

“What are you doing here?” Nuan Cee asked.

“It’s complicated.”

“Come, come.” He led her to a divan by his pillow.