

Excerpt

Cornering Carmen

Dragon Lords of Valdier book 5

By S. E. Smith

Creon Reykill was not in a good mood. In fact, he was in a really foul mood as his older brother gripped his arm, turning him in the direction of the transporter room located in one of the wings of the palace. It was the absolute last place he wanted to go.

He hated weepy females. He hated whiny, crying, clinging, fragile females. Give him a sturdy Sarafin or Curizan female any day. Not that there weren't a few Valdier women who could compete for his attention, but at least he didn't have to chance running into a Sarafin or Curizan female he had bedded again unless he wanted to. The Valdier females all wanted something from him, namely a high position, the comfort of the palace, and him waiting on them hand and foot.

Clarmisa was a perfect example of everything he hated about weak females. He ended up having to leave the planet before she would return to her clan. She had driven him out of his mind with her whining: the food was too cold, the rooms too small, the servants too rude. Then, she started on her clinging. She was too weak to walk without him holding her hand, or she was frightened by the shadows in the corridors. He didn't know why she had targeted him. He finally had enough the night she sneaked into his

living quarters. She had broken down in a torrent of tears after he ordered her out of his rooms. She was damn lucky his symbiot hadn't killed her. The only thing that saved her was probably its distaste of even touching her.

Creon felt his dragon shudder at the thought of touching the beautiful but empty Valdier princess. He could feel his own skin crawl as he remembered her touching his chest with her soft fingers. He had taken a long, hot shower before he packed his bags and took off again for the Sarafin star system. He had only returned a few days ago. He had been searching for information on his oldest brother Zoran's kidnapping. He knew the Curizan weren't behind it. He was best friends with Ha'ven, the Curizan leader.

One of his informants had mentioned a possibility that Vox, the leader of the Sarafin, might know something. Creon was friends with the huge cat-shifter. They were a wily species that were as fierce as they were cunning. He had saved the big son of a bitch during one of the battles in the Great Wars. While Vox was recovering, he and Creon had talked. They learned there was more behind the wars than they had been led to believe, but certain factions within their governments were feeding them false information. A friendship was formed, and they had worked together behind the scenes with Ha'ven to expose the plot to bring down each of their respective governments.

"I still do not understand why I need to be there," Creon muttered to Mandra as he walked next to him.

“Isn’t it bad enough I had to deal with Clarmisa sneaking into my bed? Why do I have to deal with this weak species Zoran is bringing back? Surely you can handle it?” he groaned.

Mandra glared at his youngest brother. “You owe me! After you left I had to deal with her and her father. He wanted to demand you claim her as your mate. I had to finally threaten to challenge him if he didn’t get the hell back to his clan,” he growled back. “I can deal with one whiny, weepy female but not two. Trelon said he needed help with the two sisters. We talked yesterday about how delicate and fragile they were. As soon as we get them settled, we will have mother and the healers take over their care.”

Creon groaned silently. He hated dealing with situations like this. Give him a good fight, some undercover work, even an assassination attempt on his life, but never, ever a needy female. He sighed as he followed Mandra into the transporter room. He paused to look around, hoping the females had already arrived and by some miracle they had missed them.

He walked over to a small group of warriors he recognized from being on his brother Kelan’s warship. They must have come down earlier. He was surprised that they were still here. Usually once the warriors arrived, they disappeared to find a willing female or two.

“Welcome home,” Creon said easily. “I am surprised you are still here. I thought for sure you

would have hurried to one of the pleasure houses by now," he joked, slapping Jurden on the shoulder.

If there was one thing he excelled at, it was putting others at ease and getting information. Trelon had been tight-lipped when they had talked to him. Creon liked to deal with all the information he could get. If the females needed a healer right away, he wanted one on hand to take care of them as soon as possible.

Jurden grinned at Creon. "It is good to be back, Lord Creon. We are waiting for the human females to transport down. I keep hoping to see if I can be the one to capture the short-haired one. She is unbelievable!"

Creon frowned. Why would a warrior as fierce as Jurden want a weak, alien female? He listened as the men joked about being the one strong enough to capture the alien female's heart. They laughed about how Tammit still bragged about his encounter with her.

What in the gods' names are they talking about? Creon wondered with a shake of his head. He looked at Mandra with a confused shrug. *Surely they must be talking about someone else.*

There was no way they could be talking about the females from the planet his brother had landed on. He had seen and talked to Zoran's mate. She was as gentle and delicate as his mother's flowers. She looked like a gentle breeze would knock her over.

Creon turned to say something to Mandra when the body of his brother, Trelon, and three females

appeared on the transporter platform. Creon looked on in disappointment as three small figures appeared next to Trelon. The one closest to him looked like a child. The other two females were similar in coloring, but that was about all they had in common from what he could tell with a quick glance. He started in surprise when he heard Trelon bellow out for him and Mandra to grab the females. Trelon had grabbed the smallest one up over his shoulder and taken off at a run for the door. Creon turned in time to see the female with the long white hair, planting her booted foot in his brother's face.

Creon turned to grab the female with the short hair. Yells of warning from the men behind him came too late. He reached for the female's arm only to feel his body leaving the ground and going airborne for a brief moment. It was only his years of training that prevented him from landing on his back. He twisted at the last minute, landing on his feet with a snarl.

The slender figure turned on him and struck out for his throat. Creon fell back a step as he moved away from the blow that would have left him gasping for air if it had landed. He felt his dragon roar out and push against his skin in a fierce battle to break free. Black scales, the color of the darkest night sky, rippled over his arms and up his neck as he fought for control.

What in the hell is the matter with you? He exploded as he ducked another blow aimed at incapacitating him and spun around to circle the figure.

Mate! His dragon panted. *My mate! I capture my mate.*

Mate? Creon asked, confused as he felt a booted foot connect with his stomach as he lost his focus. *You think this she-demon who is trying to kill us is your mate?* He wheezed as he tried to suck in air as her next kick connected with his groin.

Creon blocked blow after blow, trying to keep from getting his ass kicked while trying to gain control of his dragon. The damn thing was refusing to listen to him as it fought to escape and grab the female who was moving with lightning-fast moves. He finally had enough of it and let out a loud, frustrated roar as he finally got his arms around her slender form.

He was afraid to hold her too tight in case he hurt her. That was his first mistake. She took advantage of the close proximity to inflict more damage. He felt her head connect with his left eye in a blow that brought tears to his eyes. The second mistake was thinking if he pulled her head closer she couldn't hit him with it again. He yelled out as her small teeth clamped down on his ear in a vicious bite that had him releasing his hold. That was his third mistake. That left him vulnerable to her knee which found its way to his groin before connecting with his mouth.

Creon saw stars as he let go of the seething white-haired savage. He fell back several steps, trying to catch his breath as he put both hands on his knees to steady himself so he wouldn't fall on his ass. He spit

the blood from his busted lip out as he drew in a deep breath, willing away the pain.

Go! Why you wait? Mate get away. Chase her! Chase her! His dragon bounded around inside him.

Chase her? I'm going to strangle her! I just don't know if I'm going to do it before or after I kill Trelon, Creon growled out, painfully straightening up.

He glared at the men trying to hide their laughter. "I think you need to explain where in the dragon's balls my brothers got these females, and whose stupid idea was it to think they were delicate?" Creon growled out, wiping the blood from his mouth and wincing as he felt first his eye, then his ear.

"That little savage almost emasculated me!" Creon snarled when the men burst out laughing. "Not to mention nearly biting my ear off."

Jurden grinned. "Now you know why we were waiting. Aren't they magnificent?"

Creon felt his ear again, grimacing at the touch of blood that came away with his fingers. "Just bloody magnificent," he replied sarcastically. "And will you bloody shut the fuck up! You are not helping my pain level at this moment," he snarled.

"My lord?" Jurden asked confused.

Creon flashed a pained look at the men looking at him like he had lost more than a fight. "Not you." He grimaced again, heading toward the door. "My stupid dragon thinks that she-demon is his mate," he grumbled as the doors closed behind him.