

Time's Mistress

Alexis Alexandra

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Hannah stood upon a mountain of skulls – a macabre structure she commanded her slaves to build from the remains of those who would not accept her as their Mistress. To her right stood Willow – her stunningly beautiful lover painstakingly created with nanotechnology that would not be invented for another two thousand years. Together, they looked out over the burned ruins of what had once been the city of Greenville in stoic silence until a child no more than seven or eight climbed the mountain of skulls and stood before them.

Hannah and Willow immediately recognized the child, but neither could open their mouths to tell her she did not belong. The child looked into Hannah’s eyes – her gaze devoid of all emotion. “This is not your time, mother.”

“Ghaahhgghhhh!” Hannah gasped. No sooner had she bolted upright, then she was embraced in the arms of her lover.

“The nightmare again?” Willow asked.

“Yes and this time it was different, Mistress. Wait, were you awake? I thought you promised to use the sleep subroutines.”

“I was asleep, but you forget I’m a part of you, honey, and I woke as soon as my systems registered an elevated heartbeat and increased levels of adrenaline and cortisol. But that’s neither here nor there. You said the nightmare was different?”

“You were there, Mistress. And...and Mia.”

“And the rest? The mountain of skulls? A world in ruins? What were we doing? Why the change after all these years?”

“Slow down, Mistress. Please, I need a moment to think.”

“Take your time.”

“Thank you Mistress.”

A moment later the bedroom door opened and Mia walked in, still wiping the sleep from her eyes. “Mommy? Are you okay?”

“I’m okay, sweetie. Sorry I woke you.”

“Was it the nightmare again?”

“Unfortunately.”

Mia’s gaze shifted from her mother to Willow. “Can’t you fix mommy, Mistress?” Hannah spoke before her lover could. “How many times have I told you not to call her that?”

“I don’t understand. You call her Mistress all the time. Why can’t I?”

“You are far too young to have that conversation. Just please try to remember. She is Willow or mommy. And I will work on not referring to her as Mistress while you’re within earshot. Anyways, I’m okay, sweetie, so go back to bed and try to get some sleep.”

“Wait,” Willow said. “She deserves an answer to her question. I’m sorry, Mia, but even connected as we are, there’s nothing I can do to fix your mother’s nightmares.”

Mia stood there in silence for about ten or fifteen seconds and then smiled. “Well, the next time I’m there I’ll make things all better.”

The comment took Hannah and Willow completely by surprise. “What do you mean?” Willow asked.

“The next time I’m in mommy’s nightmare I’ll do something to make it all better.”

“Are you telling us you’re having nightmares too?”

Mia thought about the question before answering. “We’re connected,” she said holding up her right arm. Around her wrist was a sleek purple band – a bit of nanotechnology designed to allow Willow the means of keeping an eye on the child at all times.

“Can you read my thoughts?” Willow asked, her voice quivering with a hint of fear.

“Huh?”

“Nevermind. So, you think you were in your mother’s nightmare?”

“I know I was there. I don’t understand, mom. What does: this is not your time, mean?”

That confirmed it to Hannah and her lover and neither of knew what to make of this new development. “Honey, I think we need to take that band off her wrist until we figure out what’s going on.”

“I won’t be able to keep an eye on her and make sure she’s always safe,” Willow replied.

“She’s seven, Mistress...I mean...just take it off. It’s bad enough I’m having nightmares, I don’t need her suffering the same.”

“But I like my bracelet,” Mia said.

“What if I deactivate it instead? That way she’ll still be able to wear it without being connected to us.”

“Fine. Can you...”

“It’s already done.”

“Thank you, honey. Go on now, back to bed with you,” Hannah said to her daughter.”

“Okay,” Mia replied, rubbing her tired eyes. “Six. Nine. Five-six-one-nine,” she hummed as she turned and walked out of the bedroom.

Hannah shot her lover and Mistress a distraught look and she got out of bed and shut the door. “Did she just say what I think she said, Mistress? Also, I hope you understand why I didn’t call you Mistress a few times there.”

“I understand and agree with the reasoning. Believe me, her calling me Mistress surprised me as much as it did you. Anyways, please correct me if I’m wrong, but if memory serves – and we both know it does, what she said is the date we cannot travel to.”

“Yeah, that’s what I heard as well. Was it just a coincidence? Did she hear us talking about it? Did she hear it in one of the nightmares?”

“You never mentioned you used the date in your nightmares and how could she hear us when your lab is soundproofed?”

“How did she get into my nightmares? That band around her wrist. GOD! What else has she...nevermind, I don’t even want to think about it. You’re sure it’s deactivated?”

“One hundred percent.”

“And I know the date of the nightmares, Mistress, but have never said it in them. Why would I when until tonight I’ve always been alone in them?”

“I want you to concentrate on the time stream, Hannah. Focus on your daughter in the here and now and follow the thread until you no longer can.”

“I will not look into my daughter’s future.”

“I think you need to, Hannah. Please.”

“Why? Where are you going with this, Mistress?”

“It’s just a theory, but what if it’s not your future you’re seeing? What if the woman standing atop the mountain of skulls ruling over a world in ruins isn’t you at all, but your daughter?”

“You can’t be serious, Mistress. I’ve had the nightmares my entire life. I only gained access to the time stream ten years ago. How could I possibly have nightmares of a daughter years before she was born?”

“Time’s a fickle Mistress. Like I said, it’s only a theory and I understand if you don’t want to see into her future.”

“Give me your reasoning, Mistress. Make me understand why you would think it is her instead of me. And while you’re at it explain why I can’t go there or access anything in the time stream related to that date. It’s like it has been completely erased from time and you have no idea how frustrating that is for me.”

“I know exactly how you feel, honey. We’re connected, remember? Yes, you have a fortress of barriers up, but every now and then you let them down and I get a clear glimpse into that amazing mind of yours. I’m not going to lie, it’s as scary as it is beautiful. As for that ever elusive date, I’m at a complete loss. And I think it might be Mia based solely on what you said she said in the nightmare. Yes, I know it is flimsy at best, but why else would she say it isn’t your time? If not yours then whose? And you can’t deny she’s basically your younger doppelganger so that may very well be her on that mountain and not you.”

“I cannot believe my daughter would turn into that woman, Mistress.”

“And you believe you’re capable?”

“I’ve been through hell and survived, Mistress. I have all of time and space locked in my head. She doesn’t. You forget, I’ve seen my future and yes, I’m capable of some pretty fucked up shit I won’t go into with you or anyone else. I’m not going to get anymore sleep tonight so I’ll be in the lab.”

“I don’t need sleep so I’ll join you.”

“I’d rather be alone if you don’t mind, Mistress.”

“You know how I said you sometimes let your barriers down? Trying to force your way through time isn’t a good idea, Hannah. Remember what happened the last time?”

“I need to know the truth of that time dammit!”

“Then follow Mia’s thread because I will not permit further attempts to travel to that date.”

“You might be my Mistress, but don’t fool yourself, Willow, I created you and I can do so again. Perhaps mark four will be more agreeable.” No sooner were the words out of her mouth then her lover was gone. Looking down at the sleek device around her wrist, she saw a familiar date flashing on the screen. After years of failed attempts, it was the closest she and Willow could get to the mysterious June 9, 5619. She was just about to press the button to take her there when she thought of her daughter. “Dammit!”