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By Phoenix Rafael
prafael@myprivacy.ca

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Chapter Twelve

*'Cause nobody wants to be the last one there
'Cause everyone wants to feel like someone cares
Someone to love with my life in their hands
There's gotta be somebody for me like that
'Cause nobody wants to do it on their own
And everyone wants to know they're not alone
There's somebody else that feels the same somewhere
There's gotta be somebody for me out there*

*You can't give up, looking for a diamond in the rough
You never know, when it shows up, make sure you're holding on
'Cause it could be the one, the one you're waiting on
'Cause nobody wants to be the last one there
And everyone wants to feel like someone cares
Someone to love with my life in their hands
There's gotta be somebody for me, ohhh*

*Nobody wants to do it on their own
And everyone wants to know they're not alone
There's somebody else that feels the same somewhere
There's gotta be somebody for me out there
Nobody wants to be the last one there
'Cause everyone wants to feel like someone cares
There's somebody else that feels the same somewhere
There's gotta be somebody for me out there*

- Gotta Be Somebody, *by Nickelback*

It had been two weeks since my Father was found, and two weeks since both he and my Dad were brought up to Starbase Sol which orbited Earth. Looking down on Earth from operations was a sight I never thought I'd see.

In that two weeks I had attended somewhere around 50 meetings, I ate 42 meals, I attended school once, and I considered declaring martial law at least twice. I had met with Chancellor King, Executive Minister Bond, Governor General Hazel Arnardottir, and I officially welcomed 5 new diplomats to the Empire. I didn't pay attention at all at school since I feel asleep in all of my classes due to the workload as being the Regent, I considered executing Minister Bond, and the 5th Dynasty of the Lesothian People should be glad we haven't bombed them back to the stone age.

Falling asleep at school had the unintended consequence of two of my teachers attempting to give me detention. Of course being the Regent I couldn't allow it. It could be seen by some as an attempt to overthrow the monarchy. Captain Shepard promised the principal my parents would be in to see her as soon as they were well enough.

Of course I know my parents would support me, or else I'd simply refuse to ever do this job again. They really couldn't expect me to attend school and be Regent, could they? Of course Ms. Laframboise wanted to give me a medal. She thought that by doing the job I was given, I should get an A+ in her class whether I attended or not. I was surprised, but took that as a sign that she was okay with me falling asleep. It was my only "day off" since I had become Regent.

Speaking of Shepard, he and Mike had their first official date last night. They went to a chain restaurant called *East Side Mario's*. They said the food was really good, and Mike said that Shepard had been incredibly romantic. He even mentioned something about roses. Peter never got me roses.

Peter hadn't been back to school either. He decided it was his self-appointed place to remain by my side. To be honest, I was grateful for his presence. I fear that if he wasn't there, I'd have gone mad on the first day. As for his parents, well... they were in jail, being held on charges of attempting to overthrow the monarchy. Peter had decided that this was the perfect opportunity to come out to them. I disagreed, but didn't interfere. When he called saying he needed somewhere to stay, I invited him to my suite on the starbase.

I'm actually going to let the regular courts deal with his parents.

Okay I didn't believe that either after the first 30 seconds I had said it to myself, but so far I had refrained from signing the decree to transfer it to the Royal Court. The Crown Attorney wanted me to testify, but I wasn't sure what I could say since I hadn't been there. I did say I'd be in the court room if nothing else but to make sure everyone knew I was serious about the case.

Yesterday my Dad had been transferred to his own suite. He was well enough to eat solid foods, and to relax. He reminded me several times a day that he loved me, usually when he called to operations looking for a status report, and I'd tell him to go to bed.

My Father told me he loved me every day as well, usually when I stopped by the Medical Bay twice a day to check on him. His colour had returned, and he was doing a lot better. In the next few days, he'd too be joining my Dad in their suite. I told them they could have the throne back next week. It was still too far away, but it was better than nothing.

Charley Jeomery had made an almost complete recovery. The medication had worked. He still had another week in the hospital, but I was sure I'd be seeing him on that set sometime soon. Seeing as I needed a day or fifteen off after all this, that was the first place I was planning to go. My parents couldn't seriously expect me to go back to school after all this stress right away. Could they?

Feathers Driter was a tall and stalking, very imposing and intimidating man. Most people were afraid to talk to him, others cowered in fear. But the first time I had met the new Chancellor of the Empire, I really wanted to have sex.

Chancellor King decided that now was a good time to retire, just as I was starting into the business of being Regent. I wanted to strangle her, but instead accepted her resignation. It turned out in the papers I had been handed that Feathers Driter was my Dad's choice to follow in Ms. King's footsteps.

Chancellor Driter at age 35 was a gorgeous hunk. At least to me he was. To everyone else he was someone you didn't screw with. Apparently his last husband thought so too, and they were divorced after only a month of marriage. He can't keep boyfriends either, because every time we have a weekly meeting together, he mentions that Carl-this or Sfram- that had dumped him. Or he dump *them*. No one wanted to admit to being afraid, so they say Feathers had simply dumped *them*.

So here we were with another weekly meeting. He sat on the opposite side of my ornate desk. For all the high-tech on this space station, the Pharaoh's office always had this large mahogany old, antique desk with gold on the edges. No electronics built into it either. My Chief of Staff Mr. Killerguy said it was one of several important pieces that belong to the Head of State. When he tried to explain that to me, I had simply gotten up and replicated a large pizza, and started eating. My Chief of Staff tends to forget that I'm still 17.

Chancellor Driter, however, remembers quite well. He's like my High School Principal in many ways. She would learn all the new student's names on the first day, and from then on she knew your name by heart. Chancellor Driter was very much like that. Whenever he came to our weekly meetings, he always brought with him a pizza.

It's a ritual I started. I didn't want him to feel nervous, and I didn't want to jump him. So instead we shared a pizza while we went over our weekly business of the Empire. I even signed a

couple of bills with him the Leffe had passed, and vetoed one.

“So we expect if the situation in that region doesn't change in the next few days, we may have no choice but to declare martial law” Driter explained as I took a large bite out of my slice of pizza.

“Can't we just shoot first and ask questions later?” I asked with my mouth a little full. Driter just smiled as he watched me talk and eat. Earth etiquette doesn't tend to apply around people who have no idea what it is. I'm hardly the first or the last person to ever talk with their mouths full.

“If his highness wishes, we can. But a lot of innocent people will get hurt under that sort of policy.” The Chancellor had a sexy mouth and a sexy tongue. I wanted him to lick my nipples.

I paused, and opened my mouth but no words came out. I just looked at Driter, and then to my computer console on my desk. I tapped a few buttons, “Hey sexy.”

Peter appeared on screen and smiled. “Alexander, I'm so happy you called. How is your meeting going?”

I gave him a small evil grin. “It'd go a lot better if you could get here within 10 minutes or so.” We'd always talked about a threesome, but no one had met either of our expectations so far. But I knew both of our types, and I knew Peter would agree.

“I'm already on my way.” Peter closed the connection.

I smiled to the Chancellor. “So Feathers, what do you look like naked?”

“There is no such thing as *impartiality*, Minister!” I boldly replied. The Executive Minister of Earth decided that a recent decree I had issued reeked of favouritism. “And even if there was, check Article 1, Paragraph 1, Section 5 of our Basic Law. It reads, and I quote... *The Empire is an Absolute Monarchy*.”

Mr. Bond stood again. “Be that as it may, your highness but in our culture...”

“In your culture, you pretend you have this thing called impartiality, but in reality it never really works. That's why 95% of the Empire's various cultures and societies stopped pretending there was ever such a thing a very long time ago! In our trials for instance, we believe the victim should get redress. Your society frowns upon that. Well tough!”

Chancellor Driter looked over to the Executive Minister. “Minister, if you are incapable of implementing the decree, we will ask Governor General Hazel Arnardottir to remove you, and give him any and all evidence as collected by Imperial Intelligence.”

The Minister's face fell. He looked beaten now. “But you're asking me to go into Islamic

nations to ensure they are upholding some sort of absurd standard!"

I crossed my arms and looked at Mr. Bond. "Yes, I am. I will have no more bombings or terrorism within my realm, Minister!"

That's the funny thing about terrorism. It seems Mr. Bond was being bribed by someone in the terrorist world. Who exactly is classified. But it's enough for him to lose his job. And that's exactly what happened.

But I'm not uncaring. I made sure he got a really decent job. He now sells shoes at Wal-Mart. The store manager even assured me that he'd have to be extra nice. It's the only place that would hire him, and only after I called them on his behalf.

It sucked to be a convicted felon with the smudge of treason.

It was also time for one of Earth's many elections. A change in politics occurred, and Elanor Leeua of the Constitution Party won the race for Governor General. She appointed an almost unknown lady in the world of politics as Executive Minister. Sharon Ryerson was a tough person. She looked tough too. Almost a female equivalent of Chancellor Drier. But I didn't find her attractive. She somewhat reminded me of Madeline Albright.

She was with the Radical Whig Party. This would be interesting. While the Radical Whig Party didn't oppose Earth being a member of the Empire, they didn't endorse it either. And they disliked the whole Absolute Monarchy thing. Oh well, it's an imperfect universe.

The best part of the Earth election was that the Green Party was forming Her Excellency's Loyal Opposition. The term comes from the old British system. *Her Majesty's Government* and *Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition*. Replace majesty with excellency, and there you have it! My Dad thought of it. He's pretty smart.

I pressed the chime next to my Dad's quarters. When it indicated acceptance, I entered the suite. I looked around the large room, and walked over to the sofa, and sat next to my Dad. He put his arms around me, and hugged me tightly.

"I love you, Alexander." My Dad wasn't well enough to go back to work yet, according to the doctor. Right now I wish he was.

"I.. I love you too, Dad." A tear fell from my eye as the stress started to overwhelm me.

My Dad smirked a little. "I go away for a few weeks, and you replace the entire Earth government, and my own government. I really should let you be Regent more often!"

I looked at my Dad's eyes. "Oh God no! Please don't say it! I don't want your job!"

He grinned. "Just kidding. You're doing a fine job, kiddo."