

Secrets of the heart

Von Aqua111

I slowly have to (re-)learn not to make every single fanfic based on another one of my fanfics so this one finally is a stand-alone and I hope I keep my promise and won't make a sequel. Other Lien-Da/Xenin fanfics might follow but hopefully not based on this one.

Normally I don't really like that "love at first sight" concept. People in my stories should know each other at least a bit before they slowly fall in love and not immediately be in love as soon as their gazes meet. But in case of the Soultouch I think I have to make an exception. As far as I remember the description the Soultouch is that it allows Echidnas to know when they found their mate in life by laying eyes on them. Now that sounds very much like love at first sight.

The title I have chosen because while writing it I had "Tous les secrets de ton coeur" by Celine Dion (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nnMzPmaep6E>) running in loops in my head. I can't write while actually listening to music but that doesn't stop my brain from playing music the whole time.

Setting: some time before the "Dark Alliance" storyline from the Knuckles comics.

Nearly all of the characters (except a few) (c) Archie Comics/Ken Penders

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Lien-Da walked through a nearly died out hallway. That early in the morning only a few Legionnaires were around. Good for someone who wanted to enjoy a few peaceful moments before the drill of the day started again.

A sudden whistle made her stop.

"I didn't know we had someone like her in our Legion", she heard someone murmur behind her. "I wonder if that sexy is still available."

She quickly turned around to see two Legionnaires a few steps away. One of them she only noticed because of the panicking look on his face when he saw who she was and the gestures which should symbol the Echidna beside him to stay silent. But the other one caught her interest. Unlike other Legionnaires he didn't wear a cloak. Most of his body was covered in or replaced by metal and if it wasn't for the still biological half of his face and parts of his spines Lien-Da would have believed he was a robot.

"And who are you, you freak?" she asked and put on her sweetest smile when she

slowly walked closer. The other Legionnaire looked as if he wanted to run away but didn't dare to.

"The name's Xenin and I'm not a freak."

"Would you rather prefer the term 'monster' then?" She now was standing right in front of him. "So listen up, mister monster-guy. Even if I was still 'available' I bet I would be too much for you to handle. And as flattered I feel about your compliment I still prefer to be addressed as Kommissar and not as Sexy."

She had to suppress a chuckle when she saw his eyes widened in realisation. He quickly lowered his head.

"I'm sorry, Kommissar. I didn't recognise you at first."

"You didn't? I would have said everyone in this Legion should know me from afar by now. Where the heck have you been the past months?"

"Research lab. I just came here with a few others several days ago."

"Ah, one of the experiments."

Lien-Da knew that some Dark Legion scientists were developing new armour that could withstand more than the cybernetics they were using right now, maybe even Guardian attacks. A few Legionnaires were chosen to test the different kinds of new armour and one of these guinea pigs was standing in front of her right now. But as far as she remembered only the body should have this exo armour, not half of the head too.

"And what happened to your face? I don't think that was the idea of these scientists too."

"I already had that before the experiment. A guardian attack destroyed half of it. Also was the reason I lost one of my arms though that replacement doesn't stand out anymore thanks to the rest of the exo armour. I wanted to return the favour but unfortunately it was just a graze."

"A Guardian just blasted off half of your face and your arm and you still tried to fight him?" Though Lien-Da didn't want to admit it this guy somehow fascinated her. She didn't know many Legionnaires who wouldn't have crocked up in pain in such a situation.

Xenin looked up again.

"As long as I can hold a weapon I will continue to fight for the Legion. To me pain was never a reason to simply stop."

"You really are a freak", Lien-Da said and smiled, "But at least the loyalest one I have ever met. And now excuse me, but I think Dimitri awaits me."

She turned around and slowly walked away, still feeling his stare until she walked around a corner. This guy still could get interesting.

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"Planet Mobius calling Xenin. Hello-ho!"

Xenin quickly turned his head when his roommate Iskander waved his hand in front of Xenin's eyes.

"What the heck is wrong with you? You have followed me back to our room like a sleepwalker and now you are staring at empty air for several minutes already."

"She's ... the Kommissar. I wolf-whistled the Kommissar."

"That's still bothering you? Oh come on, she wasn't even mad at you, rather seemed to be amused. Besides it mainly was her fault after all. If she doesn't want to attract males then she shouldn't dress like a little slut."

Within a blink Xenin grabbed him at the collar and slammed him against the wall.

"Dare to insult her one more time and your head will roll", he growled.

"Hey, I'm sorry, okay?" Iskander quickly said. "But seriously dude, we slagged our leaders off often enough and you never had a problem with it and now you suddenly behave as if you are her boyfriend."

Xenin stared at Iskander for a few more seconds until he finally let up on him. Yes, what was actually wrong with him? Why did he want to defend her at any cost? Her boyfriend... He could have laughed at that thought. As if someone like her would ever be interested in someone like him... But then again she had talked to him and only to him. Iskander had been ignored although he had been standing right beside them the whole time. He could still see her smile before his mind's eye...

"And here comes that gaze again", Iskander sighed.

Xenin's thoughts were interrupted when someone knocked at the door. Another Legionnaire came in and said, "Lord Dimitri wants to speak to both of you."

Xenin vigorously shook his head. No time for daydreams now. He needed to focus on his work again.

His heart made a little jump when he saw Lien-Da there as well. She caught his gaze and lightly smiled which didn't make it better. He couldn't avert his eyes until Dimitri started speaking.

"Our young friend here", he nodded at a Legionnaire standing beside him, "had some interesting news for us. He told me that during his patrols close to Albion he noticed Guardians in the canyon north of the Emerald Sea. They had been there suspiciously often. I now want to send a scout troop under the lead of Lien-Da there to find out what's really going on. Kiran, you will guide them to the place where you have detected suspicious activity. You three", he nodded at Iskander and two other Legionnaires in the room "have been chosen because you are my most experienced scouts. And since we might have to deal with Guardians here I will send out Xenin and Charon from our new elite troop. But remember, this is only a recon mission so stay hidden and only try your new sturdiness against Guardian attacks when nothing else is possible anymore. Now you can go. The hovercrafts are ready."

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They had landed outside the canyon and Kiran had led them over different paths for several minutes already.

"I wonder why the Guardians even had been here", Lien-Da said and looked up the cliffs, "Sure it's a good hiding place but only if you're a marmot. From my grandfather I know what stuff Guardians are surrounded by in Haven and I don't think they will like that as a new hangout."

"Don't worry, you will meet them soon."

There was something in Kiran's voice Lien-Da didn't like at all. Even more reason to be on guard.

Was it a movement she had noticed or something strange she had heard? She didn't know it but she still ordered her little troop to stop. Only seconds later an Echidna appeared on one of the cliffs. From the look of his clothes he must have been one of the inhabitants of Albion.

"Good you are here already", he said, "We didn't expect that Dimitri would send so many of your for a simple scout mission but we are more than you nevertheless and

what's even better", he looked at Lien-Da and his grin widened, "we can get rid of at least one of the brats from the house of Dimitri."

Several more Echidnas now appeared between the rocks.

Xenin quickly turned around. "Where is Kiran, that little traitor?"

"Good to hear that at least one of you missed me." While the others still had stared at the newcomers from Albion, Kiran had climbed up the rocks and now was standing between them. "I promised you will meet Guardians and I will keep that promise - provided that dead Legionnaires go at the same place where deceased Guardians are."

The snipers from Albion opened fire but Xenin and Charon had quickly jumped forward and shielded the others with their bodies. The second it needed the snipers to realize they had two units that could barely be harmed by their blasters in front of them was enough for the Legionnaires to seek cover and return fire. At first it looked as if the Albions were losing this battle and either had to retreat or fall without even a little success on their side but then...

"Kommissar, watch out!" But Xenin's call had been too late and he was too far away to shield her. A blaster hit Lien-Da's back. With a cry of pain she fell to the ground.

"You'll be sorry, you tragic waste of skin!" Xenin screamed and rushed over to the rocks. The sniper tried to escape by climbing up but the cyborg was faster since he didn't have to be careful where he set his steps - a fall down these rocks barely would have hurt him.

The pain in her back was overwhelming but still Lien-Da fought to stay conscious. First her eyes only were on Xenin who hunted the Albion Echidna over the rocks but then her gaze wandered off and she noticed another sniper between the rocks aiming at the cyborg and she immediately knew that he was going for a headshot through the unprotected half of Xenin's head. She wrapped her fingers around her gun and tried to lift up her arm. That little movement already sent hell fires over her back.

*As long as I can hold a weapon I will continue to fight... Pain was never a reason to simply stop...*

Xenin's words echoed through her mind when she bit down her pain. Her blurring vision made it harder to aim but she had to hit her target on first try since she knew she wouldn't be able to lift up that gun a second time. A shot. The sniper let his weapon fall and doubled over, his left hand pressed against his right shoulder. Powerlessly Lien-Da let her arm sink down and closed her eyes, gave in to the numbing darkness.

Her unconsciousness could only have lasted for a few minutes. When she slightly reopened her eyes everything around her was calm.

"Are you okay, Kommissar?"

She nearly was disappointed that it was Iskander kneeling beside her but before she could ask herself where Xenin was she already saw him and Charon climbing down some rocks.

"Looks like these few were the only ones around", Charon reported. "But we can't tell if more of them won't be on the way if their snipers won't return and we already have lost two of our scouts and our Kommissar is wounded. Unfortunately we also can't escape from this place because they have sabotaged our hovercrafts. I have called the base but it will take a little while until they arrive."

While he was speaking Xenin silently knelt beside Lien-Da and carefully examined her

wound.

"That blaster just burned me", she said, "That pain will soon get lighter and the rest also is nothing the medics at the base can't take care of." She tried to sit up a bit but immediately gave up because the hellfire pain returned.

"First we have to get you to a more protected place and take care of your wounds", Xenin said and gently picked her up. "Can you two go on patrol and make sure there isn't an army from Albion on the way?"

In the shadow of a rock shelter he carefully let her down again.

"These rocks will shield us", he said and Lien-Da was sure he didn't just mean a shield from enemies but also from the curious gazes of the two other Legionnaires.

Xenin had brought one of the first aid kits from the hovercrafts. He started cleaning Lien-Da's wounds and she tried to blank out the pain by only concentrating on his touch.

"I have to thank you", he said after a while.

"What for?" she asked and then sharply breathed in because she was quickly sat up only to find herself leaned against Xenin's chest a second later.

"Sorry, but I had to do it fast and without much announcement or else it would have been more pain", he apologised. "That way I can bandage you better."

It actually would have been much lighter to wrap bandages around her torso if she had been leaning against a rock instead of Xenin's chest because right now her caregiver was sitting in his own way but she couldn't say she disliked this position, not at all.

"I owe you my life", Xenin now answered her previous question. "I saw the other sniper from the corner of my eye and only a second later he nearly fell down the cliff in pain. Then I saw you pointing your gun in his direction. If it wasn't for you I would have been dead before I even could have tried to turn around."

"Guess I would never have been able to forgive me if I had seen you being shot and I hadn't even tried to prevent it."

"And I don't think I would have been able to live on if anything worse would have happened to you because ... 'cause I think I ... I'm ..."

Xenin's voice faded and for a few seconds they were only looking in each other's eyes. Then Xenin slowly lowered his head and Lien-Da tried her best to sit up a bit more. They were only centimetres away from each other when they were interrupted by steps coming closer.

"The hovercraft from the base is here."

The two turned their heads and saw Charon who suddenly found a rock at his side very interesting and Iskander who tried to count the birds in the sky. Lien-Da wasn't sure if she should be annoyed about the interruption or amused by their stupid reactions. Xenin's face turned a little bit red but since he was only showing the cybernetic half of his face to the other Legionnaires Lien-Da was the only one who noticed it.

For the whole flight Xenin remained at her side and they didn't separate until Lien-Da was brought to the medic bay.

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"And here we go again. Same picture as before, only horizontally", Iskander

commented when he entered their room. This time Xenin was lying on his bed and blankly staring at the ceiling.

"Why are you even here anyways? Since you're crushing on her so obviously I thought you would have spent every single second at her side since she left the medic bay."

"I would love to but I'm not really afraid of how she could react. What if she's annoyed by my obtrusiveness?" Xenin said without taking his eyes from the ceiling.

"Well, to me it looked as if she had liked your presence before and she sure wouldn't mind a little visit from you."

"Before... The canyon was another situation. There were possibly enemies on the way, she was wounded and I took care of her. But now she's back in her safe room and the medics have finished what I started. Besides she's still the Kommissar and I'm one of the ordinary soldiers. Even if she likes me too a relationship wouldn't be too long since there will surely a lot of other males of higher standing be interested in her and it's her right to choose someone better than me."

Iskander closed his eyes and rubbed the bridge of his nose.

"Xenin, if I wouldn't hurt my own foot rather than your rear I would kick you. You are such a fierce fighter and still would give up without trying if it comes to a girl. Where's the problem with just going to her and asking about her well-being? Then you will see if she still likes your nearness in the safety of her room."

"Other Legionnaires are going to see me when I enter her room", Xenin tried another desperate excuse.

"So what? They know your loyalty and that you have been in her troop when she was wounded. To them you will only be a loyal Legionnaire who is worried about his commanding officer."

Xenin now finally had gotten up and took a deep breath. Yes, it was worth a try. How much could he lose if he only went there and asked how she felt? It would have been a shame if Xenin was afraid of even such a little harmless action. Besides even overcoming his fears and asking her out right away would have been better at the moment than listening to Iskander's constant bugging.

Lien-Da was lying on her stomach but she sat up a bit when she heard that someone entered. Xenin's stomach made a loop in its own personal rollercoaster when she smiled at him.

"Good to see you, I nearly thought our two peepers scared you off and you would stay away from me from now on", she chuckled.

"I wasn't sure if ... if I already could visit you that early. I wanted to give you a bit more time to recover."

"I'm feeling okay again. It only hurts when I move too much." A few seconds of silence followed then she said, "You know, I'm not going to explode any second or something like that. You can sit down on my bed if you want to."

A little spark of hope aglow in Xenin's heart when he sat down beside her and it turned into a burning flame when she said, "I wished these two idiots hadn't interrupted. It was right after a battle, you took care of my wounds, we were so close ... it would have been perfect. And then they came and spoiled it all."

"Maybe the ambience leaves much to be desired but I don't think it will be too disturbing."

Xenin slipped closer and helped her to sit up a bit more, this time more carefully than the last time, until she was leaning against his chest again. He still was nervous but now his fears were gone and he wondered why he even had been afraid to go to her

before.

"I think I can get used to that", Lien-Da silently said and looked up into his eyes.

For a moment they stayed wrapped up in silence simply enjoying each other's near then Xenin leaned down a bit more and placed a gentle kiss on her lips which she gladly returned.

When Xenin walked back to his room later that night he felt like a sleepwalker again but even if this all was just a dream it was the most wonderful dream he ever had and he wished he would never wake up from it again.