

Introducing Pietas, Bad Boy King of the Immortal Sempervians



Pietas ap Lorectic, king of the immortal Sempervians, is introduced in chapter ten of Alitus, Tales of the Chosen. The "bad boy" king delights in harrassing his twin sister Dessy, whom readers of the Tarthian Empire series books will recognize as Empress Rheyndestoiya.

Art by
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From Alitus, Tales of the Chosen

Chapter Ten

*Tarthian Empire space, Tarth orbit
Le Persequor - lurk mode (invisible), Throne Room
Sumertsag 42, 4664 Tradestandard (15,127 AD Terran)*

Lord Pietas ap Lorectic mounted the dais of the cavernous throne room, and adjusted the hang of his white fur cape before seating himself. He fussed with its fall around his feet, and finally motioned to his android bodyguard. "Mirror."

Uurah activated the holographic reflection for him.

Placing his hands on the armrests of the throne, Pietas lifted his chin. The stately pose showed off his long platinum hair, and the satin turquoise lining of his cape. It also reflected the simple throne and empty chamber.

"No." Pietas stood. "Turn it off. I don't like it. My sister won't be impressed."

The android shut down the program. "How can she not be impressed, my lord? You are king of the immortals."

"You would think so, Uurah, but this is my twin sister we're talking about. Dessy's not impressed by anything I do. She's been at my side since before we were born. She can't even fathom the concept of my birth having occurred before hers being a sign of my superiority. She certainly won't be impressed by my clothing or appearance."

"I cannot imagine anyone not being awed by you, Lord Pietas."

"You have to say that, Uurah. You're my bodyguard."

The android approached him. "Were you lying to me, my lord, when you said I was a sentient being capable of independent decisions and opinions?"

"With your sensors? What would be the point? You'd know I was lying."

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"Then you know, my lord, that I do not have to say it. I tell you when I disagree. I disagree whenever I think it's appropriate or justified."

"To my own annoyance at times. In fact, Uurah, I wish I hadn't made you impossible for me to kill." The android was capable of defending himself. No human could stand against him, and most Sempervians would have difficulty doing so. Under the laws Pietas had written for his people, Uurah had the right to defend himself against anyone. Of all the androids in the Sempervian army, only he had the right to defend himself from Pietas.

"You regret that, my lord?"

Pietas tugged at the edge of a sleeve, straightening it. "Often."

"Why? Am I heinous in some way?"

"Heinous?" Pietas cracked a grin. "No. Not at all. You were created to appear human, and you're attractive. Not as attractive as me, of course, but after all, I am the epitome of manhood and masculine beauty. No one surpasses me in looks." Pietas brushed at his sleeve. "You're not as brilliant as I am but you have as good a memory. Mine is eidetic, so I never forget, but there are some things I choose not to pay attention to, and you pay attention to every detail. You're a good complement for me. Therefore, I need you. Plus, you know the rules of Peril, and you keep me honest when I'm playing."

"Then why do you wish you could kill me?"

"Because you argue with me, Uurah." He picked at a speck of dust. "I dislike being challenged."

"Oh, but you thrive on challenge, my lord. You are at your best when things don't go your way."

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Pietas jerked up his head, absorbed now, in what Uurah was saying. "Indeed? In what way?"

"Had you not been exiled from Earth, you would not have become the most powerful ruler on Sempervia. Had the small-minded citizens there not exiled you, you would not now be king of the greatest army of androids and immortals in the galaxy. You have been prevented from avenging yourself on humanity for that initial exile multiple times, which has driven you to find other ways to accomplish your purpose. Each failure has honed your desire to succeed. You have turned the greatest challenges of your life into your greatest achievements. Therefore, it is challenge which has made you great."

Pietas considered that a moment. "Uurah, I believe you are correct."

"Of course I am, my lord. Like you, I am infallible. My internal logic demands it. Are there other reasons you wish to kill me?"

"Well, you and my cat..." He chewed his lower lip, loathe to admit the last.

When Pietas didn't complete his sentence, Uurah took a step closer. "The cat and I... what, my lord?"

"Are my only companions. Most people would find that reason to allow you to live, but for me, you're a symbol of my exile. I'm quite alone, except for the two of you. If you were both gone, I might not recall being driven out."

"My lord Pietas, with your intellect and memory, you could never forget. Without me to ensure your needs are met, you might be forced to rely upon humans, and you know how inept they are. Depending upon the other exiles to care for you is to expect those beneath your notice to anticipate or even understand your needs. Their egos

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would demand attention. My ego does not get in the way of serving you. It is superior."

"You think your ego is superior to mine?" Pietas lifted one brow.

"No one's ego is superior to yours, my lord, but mine is superior to almost everyone else's. I always serve your pleasure. To be considered your companion is my highest honor." He made a bow. "I am quite sure if your cat were sentient, it would feel the same way."

"You are right, Uurah. I applaud your logic. So"-- He held his arms out to the sides --"You think this cape looks all right?"

"Certainly *not*, my lord. You never look 'all right.' You look magnificent."

"I so rarely see anyone. I want to look my best." Pietas avoided looking into the dark area behind Uurah. "It's lonely on this ship." He heaved a sigh. "Never mind. Let's stay with this outfit. I've already tried on three, and my sister has been waiting for... How long?"

"How you look is important. Who would mind waiting for *you*?"

"I doubt what you say is true, Uurah, but it's nice of you to say it."

"I'm honored you liked my words, my lord, but as I am infallible, I must remind you that they are true. Perhaps, if you're feeling isolated, I could send for Tiklaus? You haven't seen your cat yet today."

"A brilliant idea. I've missed playing with my kitty." Pietas motioned to the door. "Fetch the beast."

Led by android security, the cat arrived a few minutes later. The huge black panther blinked lazily, its green-eyed gaze taking in the throne room. When the cat spied Pietas, it pricked its ears upward.

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"There's my good, big kitty." Pietas knelt to receive the animal. "Come, Tiklaus."

The slinky cat padded across the room and head-butted Pietas in the chest.

Tiklaus knocked Pietas onto his back and crawled atop him.

Laughing, the king rolled on the floor and tussled with the creature, petting its head and tugging its ears. Tiklaus set massive paws on Pietas's shoulders, flattened him, and sprawled atop him, holding him down.

"You great oaf! I swear; you weigh more than I do." He spent several minutes playing with the animal. "Uurah? Distract Tiklaus with a treat so I can get up, will you?"

The android took a treat from his pocket and clicked his fingers. "Tiklaus. Look. Goodies for you." The cat climbed off Pietas and lumbered over to the android to investigate the snack.

While Tiklaus ate the treat and snuffled Uurah's pockets for more, Pietas stood and brushed himself off. He accepted a treat from Uurah, and held it out on his palm as an offering for Tiklaus. The cat ate it, and then nuzzled Pietas's hand. Pietas stroked the cat's muzzle.

"You were right, Uurah. A session with Tiklaus did make me feel better."

The android bowed. "My lord, would you prefer one of your jeweled crowns instead of the one you're wearing?"

Pietas lifted a hand to the slender silver crown. "What's wrong with this one?"

"In this light, against your pale skin and white hair, the silver disappears. Since it's a symbol of your power, it should be seen. You should look like the royalty you are."

"No. I'm not changing again."

"Then perhaps I could adjust the lighting to enhance the crown's shine."

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"Try that." He flipped a hand in Uurah's direction.

The android played with a remote, tracking the room's lights toward Pietas. "Sit down again, if you please, my lord."

Pietas returned to his throne and placed his hands on the armrests. "Better?"

"Perfect." Stepping around Tiklaus, Uurah produced a comb from a pocket. "May I?" With permission, he combed the long strands of hair and arranged the tresses to fall over Pietas's shoulders. "There, my lord. The metal's shine is obvious now. It's not as splendid as your other crowns, but even the priceless gems in those can't match your natural beauty." Uurah stepped back and activated the holo-mirror again. "Better?"

"You're right of course. You usually are, Uurah." Pietas turned his head side to side, admiring the view. The light shone directly on his hair, making the silver crown gleam. "I do look more kingly, don't I? Perhaps my sister will think so."

Uurah bowed. "Her opinion is beneath your notice as king, my lord, but it's so like you to be humble enough to care."

He preened at the android's words. "Well, humility is one of my finer features."

"It is indeed, Lord Pietas."

"I wish my sister appreciated me the way you do." Pietas clicked his fingers to summon Tiklaus. The cat trotted up the steps, and sat beside the throne. Pietas reached down to pet the cat's head.

Uurah shut off the mirror. "I may not have been with you since your birth, lord, but unlike your sister, I've been with you when it's important. I've seen your greatness first hand, in ways she has not."

"That you have, Uurah. That you have."

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"Shall I admit her, my lord?"

Tiklaus stretched out and placed its chin on Pietas's feet.

Pietas sat back. "How long has she waited?"

"A few hours."

He sighed. "She'll complain, won't she? No matter how little we keep her waiting, she always complains. We're immortals. It isn't as if time means anything to us."

"That is true, my lord. But then, has reasoning with your sister ever been easy?"

"You're right. Dessy's always been impossible. May as well admit her and get it over with."

Uurah escorted the woman into his presence, and remained near the door.

Pietas motioned to him. "You may go, Uurah. I'm safe."

The android bowed. The door cycled open and shut as he left.

The moment they were alone, his sister came straight to him without stopping to offer even a cursory bow. "You swore you wouldn't keep me waiting again. I've been here for hours, Pietas. I'm busy. I do *not* have time for your childish games."

Tiklaus sat up and snarled, making his sister retreat a few steps.

"Easy, boy." Pietas petted the cat, standing as he did so. "Childish?" On the dais, at almost seven feet in height, he towered over his sister. "Even this animal senses your affront."

His sister sneered at the cat.

"I demand you perform an obeisance to your king." He pointed to the floor.

"I will not kneel to you, Pietas. Number one, I'm your sister. We're equals." Dessy stripped off her gloves, and gestured around the empty room. "Number two, it's just us."

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"You are the empress of the Tarthian Empire. If anyone entered your throne room without bowing, what would you do? I am King of the Sempervians, lord of an army of androids and powerful immortals, yet you dare enter my presence without showing me respect?"

The icy stare of her storm-colored gaze all but formed ice crystals in the room. Keeping her gaze on his, Dessy lowered herself to her knees, but she did not lower her head. She narrowed her eyes in an unmistakable challenge.

Pietas seated himself, and adjusted the placement of his hands. He lifted his head, allowing the light to bathe him in its bright glow. Beside the throne, Tiklaus settled once more.

"Now, my sister. You came to ask a favor, I believe. After that show of disrespect, I'm unlikely to give it to you, but go ahead and ask."

Dessy shot to her feet, fire forming in her eyes. Her shape-shifting dragon self, Fireshade, was a master of fire and ice elements. She could scorch him to a cinder or freeze him in ice.

Pietas felt a momentary thrill of fear. Within, Stormsinger, his own dragon, roared at the challenge.

That Dessy hadn't already stalked from the room told him his sister didn't *want* whatever it was she'd come to him for. She *needed* it. Which meant she'd do anything he asked. A slow smile crept across his face. *This is going to be more fun than I thought.*

"How delightful you are when you're angry, little sister. Stormsinger and I have always welcomed engaging you and Fireshade. It's a pity more of us can't shift into

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dragons. What a challenge it would be to rule a host of them." He rubbed his chin. "I don't think 'host' is the right word. Perhaps it's a clutch of dragons, or is that a 'thunder of dragons?' Yes. I rather like that. A 'thunder of immortal dragons.' What do you think?"



Stormsinger

"Pietas!" She clenched her fists. "Will you focus for a minute?"

Laughing, he settled back on his throne. Crossing one leg over the other, he regarded his sister. He'd delighted in pushing her to the limits of her tentative grip on sanity since he could remember. They didn't call him Bringer of Chaos for no reason.

While Dessy seethed, her dragon spirit shimmered around her in a haze of red.

"It's your fault I'm so unfocused, Dessy. You know I tend to be" -- He tapped a

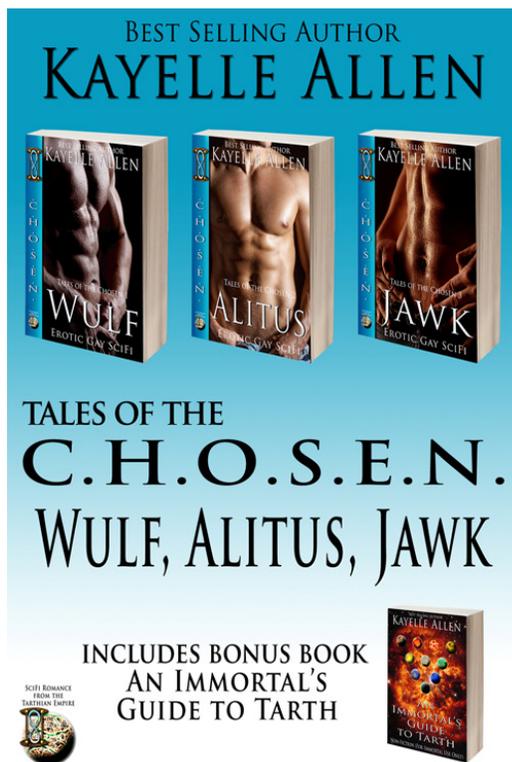
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finger against his cheek -- "What was that word you used last time? Oh yes, 'fractious.' What an entertaining word. 'Likely to be troublesome.' That was my favorite definition. It fits me, don't you think? 'Pietas tends to be fractious.' A true statement. So, sister, you know I become 'fractious' when I'm annoyed. And you have annoyed me greatly today."

Though she bowed her head and clasped her hands together, Dessy's attitude was far from prayerful. He could almost see the waves of fury rolling off her.

Smiling, Pietas placed his hands on his lap. "Perhaps if you grovel sufficiently, I'll feel more benevolent toward you." He flicked his fingers toward her. "By all means, do let us hear you try."

From the Tales of the Chosen



Whom do you trust when you live forever? The C.H.O.S.E.N.

In the secret society of the Chosen, a group of mortals who serve the immortal Sempervians, being gay or straight is no different from being brown-eyed or blue-eyed. No one notices or cares. But disloyalty among the Chosen is punishable by death, and in this trilogy, everyone's loyalty is questioned.

Covert alignments, mistrust, mistakes, and regrets pepper the playing field. Both the Chosen and the Sempervians harbor enemies and spies within their ranks -- some known and tolerated, others concealed behind layers so convoluted eternity isn't long enough to figure them out. When you factor in multiple allegiances and aliases, knowing who to trust takes on a whole new level of danger -- especially if you live forever.

When the fate of hearts rivals the fate of worlds, victory costs everything.
Includes Bonus Book: An Immortal's Guide to Tarth; A Handbook for Immortals Relocating to the Tarthian Empire

Wulf, Tales of the Chosen

Superstar Wulf Gabriel must depend on the one man he swore he would never trust again. The most powerful man in the empire - the Harbinger. Lust. Power. Forgiveness. A Chosen loves forever.

Wulf Gabriel longs for freedom. A superstar in the Tarthian Empire, he is bound by an unscrupulous agent to a restrictive contract. With his career threatened and his life at risk, Wulf must trust the one man he swore would never again control him -- Luc Saint-Cyr, the Harbinger.

For the Harbinger, saving Wulf is a matter of asserting his will. The enigmatic Luc's legendary power makes him the most feared man in the empire. But to win Wulf's heart, Luc will have to risk baring his own.

Alitus, Tales of the Chosen

Life gets complicated when the empress orders Alitus to find out if a friend's lover is having an affair. Especially since the affair is with Alitus. Passion. Submission. Loyalty. A Chosen bares his heart forever.

Alitus lives in a world full of political intrigue, and he is supremely alone. As a Better, an enhanced human, he can touch no one -- his pheromones are addictive. He keeps his affair with Wulf secret, because Wulf belongs to another, a powerful man allied with the empress. When the man asks the empress to investigate whether Wulf is having an affair, Wulf's relationship with Alitus could be exposed. Complicating matters, the empress reveals her immortality, and requires Alitus to prove his loyalty. Her test will throw him straight into Wulf's arms, right in front of the empress and Wulf's lover. Hiding what they are to each other has taken discipline and denial. Now, it will take a miracle.

Jawk, Tales of the Chosen

When immortal Luc Saint-Cyr arranges a ménage with Wulf and Jawk, he gets far more than he bargained for. Pleasure. Trust. Possession. A Chosen's betrayal is forever. Jawk works at Batchelors, an exclusive gay club in the heart of Tarth City, where he meets the immortal Luc. Luc offers Jawk a deal too good to pass up, one night showing him and his lover a good time in exchange for far more than his usual pay. But the sensual Jawk is not what he seems, and one night with him will change the immortal's alliances forever.

An Immortal's Guide to Tarth

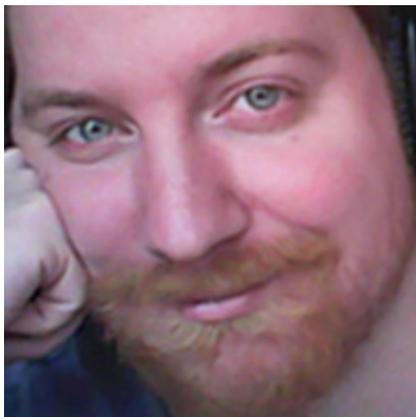
A bit of fiction, written in a non-fiction way, *An Immortal's Guide to Tarth* offers guidance from Joss Avaton, one of the immortals. She provides dire warnings about which immortal not to cross, and what to do about pesky Mundanes (namely, those annoying humans), and who among the Chosen is not to be trusted.

About the Author



Kayelle Allen is a best-selling, award-winning author. Her unstoppable heroes and heroines include contemporary every day folk, role-playing immortal gamers, futuristic covert agents, and warriors who purr. Homeworld <http://kayelleallen.com>
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