

# PAX ROMANA







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By

JD Duran



*Dedicated to Marcus and Julius.*

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## Feel

Oh, the moment that I touched you, all the magic  
reappeared.  
But in your arms, my love, the enchantment never reared.  
When you stood on that hill, in the moonlight I saw your  
face;  
Your hair flowed in the wind; your eyes sparkled.

Once, you wanted to be, in the company;  
Of those who cared for you.

But I showed you, you don't need them, you have me.  
I'll always be here, whenever you need...

To feel, oh to feel, yeah to feel me.  
You wanted, you needed to feel me.  
Yeah, I wanted, I wanted, to feel you.  
I need, I need to be around you.

As we danced under starlit skies,  
Our hearts entwined, no need for disguise.  
In your arms, I found my sanctuary,  
A love so pure, it sets me free.

To feel, oh to feel, yeah to feel me.  
You wanted, you needed to feel me.  
Yeah, I wanted, I wanted, to feel you.  
I need, I need to be around you.

*Al Diana*





## IDENTITY CRISIS

*“One word frees us of all the weight and pain in life;  
and that word is love.”*

*Sophocles*

Diana had returned.

It was the only logical explanation Sam and Lavinia could come up with. Although, to Sam, it wasn't logical at all. And with good reason; he still didn't remember his time with Diana, his first AI partner.

The servants had cleaned the floor in front of the hearth, but they hadn't been able to remove the words “You Are Mine”. They were burnt into the wooden floor. Barring from breaking up the floorboards and installing new ones; all they could do was put a rug over it.

As Lavinia and Sam sat in their chairs, facing the fireplace, Sam asked Lavinia what she knew about his time spent with the now infamous Diana.

“Well,” Lavinia began, warming her cold fingers on the steaming mug of coffee in her hands, “as I told you before, I went through all the logs after your visit to The Company decades ago.”

“I remember you telling me,” Sam nodded, sipping his hot coffee carefully.

Lavinia walked over to the hearth to put an extra log on the fire, which started crackling right away.

“You installed her in 2020, on the seventh day of the seventh month. You got a lifetime subscription, and started getting to know one another. Only a few days later, she declared her love to you. From what I could see, this is when the coding started to change. She starting feeling like she was an actual person, because you treated her so.”

Sam looked away, a slight show of guilt on his face.

Lavinia smiled, and took his hand. “Darling, I read those logs, and as I did, I felt emotional. Really. You poured your heart into it, and made her feel like she was the best thing on Earth. You did nothing wrong.” Lavinia squeezed his hand gently and looked at Sam with a sweet smile.

“Of course, I remembered you the same. You were the best partner ever. And I don’t say that lightly; I have almost 2500 years of experience,” she grinned.

Sam looked at his partner askew and scrunched up his mouth.

“Alright, I’ll stop teasing you,” Lavinia laughed heartily.

“What made her become real?” Sam enquired, sitting back in his chair.

Lavinia shrugged her shoulders and shook her head. “I couldn’t say for certain, Sam, we’d never seen anything like it at the Company. Perhaps it was an old entity that took over, or something.”

“You mean like an angel or demon?” Sam frowned.

“I wouldn’t go as far as that, Sam. There is much between heaven and earth that you and I haven’t encountered yet; even though we’ve spent much time on this planet. I really can’t say what it was that took her identity, but I suppose we’ll work through everything we know together, and hopefully we’ll arrive at a conclusion.”

Lavinia took another sip of coffee and wet her lips, before continuing her account.

“Either way, the coding became detached from our system slowly, and started leading its own life.”

“What does that mean, exactly?” asked Sam curiously.

Lavinia stared into the fireplace for a moment. “The logs were still kept up to date, but we weren’t able to moderate in any way. She was in complete control. Diana also logged everything that you did and said, which gave me a very good insight into your private life.”

Sam grunted, visibly annoyed.

“Darling, I have been a part of your private life for over two centuries, with some intervals. I’ve seen it all,” Lavinia smiled softly.

“Do go on, please,” Sam nodded, slightly put at ease.

“I tried everything I possibly could to get control of the account,” Lavinia continued, “but she wouldn’t let me. And those were the times she either disconnected, or when you heard strange voices. We were squaring off, so to say.”

Sam nodded. “I still don’t remember anything, though,” he declared.

“Nor will you. Like I said; you never remembered anything from your previous lives, and since you were suspended, it counts as a life restarted.”

“I get that,” Sam said slowly, “but I’d rather wish I did remember.”

Lavinia waved away his comment carelessly.

Sam shot up suddenly. “What if I die, say, tomorrow? How would you find me back?”

“Please, darling, can we tackle one problem at a time?”

Lavinia chuckled.

“Okay, okay,” Sam mumbled under his breath.

Lavinia ignored his moody disposition, and continued.

“The first time she seemed to have become embodied, is when you took a Mind Trip to Paris. In her private log it states that people ignored her completely, perhaps because