



RAEDER'S WOMAN

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Darkeen Dynasty:

Raeder's Woman

Angelina Evans

Prologue

Founded by a pirate who made himself a king, Illusions became the most successful business in four dimensions and the cornerstone of a dynasty founded on perfect genetic matches.

Illusions

Where Fantasy Is Truly

Better Than Reality

And for the women found to be genetic matches for the men of the Darkeen dynasty...the motto was true.

Chapter 1

Raeder, his shield-brother Kael behind him, translocated to the surface of Callen Minor. Except scorched rubble, nothing else was left. Everything and everyone was gone and he hadn't been here to defend them.

"They didn't have a chance." Kael's voice was hushed.

Raeder's jaw clenched. The attack had come from space. Bolt after bolt of energy rained down. Explosions rocked the world. Nowhere to run, nowhere to hide and no one to come to their aid.

He had failed and people had died.

How many men and women had screamed for him and his kin? How many children had died staring at the sky as it was torn again and again by silver-white power bolts? His chest felt tight, but he couldn't cry, he didn't know how. He wished he did.

"Incoming communication."

He ignored the voice from the communication implant behind his left ear and strode away from Kael and the others who had translocated to the planet. The welfare and safety of this planet had been his responsibility. It felt like steel bands squeezed his chest; there was a bitter taste in his mouth.

The burden of death and destruction were his alone to shoulder. He couldn't bring back the people who had died, but he would find their killers. He wouldn't rest until they were dead.

Kael's voice broke the silence. "Raeder, you'll want to hear this. It's from the Illusions outpost on Centera."

Hands fisted, heart pounding, Raeder stared at the devastation all around him. The legendary Illusions. He wanted to tear each outpost down with his bare hands. There hadn't been a genetic mate found for an Allourian male by any of the Illusions outposts in over two generations. It was a failure. If his family hadn't relied on the *fantasy* of Illusions, the people on this planet would still be alive.

He and his kin would find a way to keep Allourian Space safe, and it wouldn't be dependent on the Rilirian Field and perfect genetic matches.

"They found your mate."

A hard smile touched his lips. His genetic match had been found. Why now when it was too late for Callen Minor? It wouldn't bring back the people who had died. It wouldn't bring back his lost honor.

He didn't want a genetic mate. When he married it would benefit the people he'd been born to protect, not the illusion of genetic perfection Illusions wove.

A tiny spot of color in the black debris caught his attention. He knelt and pulled a tiny object from the

rubble.

His stomach knotted as he stared at the tiny shoe. Half burned, what was left still a bright pink, the shoe wasn't even as long as his thumb. He didn't want to see it, didn't want to feel the searing pain in his gut. His life had been dedicated to protecting his people and he hadn't done that. He hadn't been here.

He wouldn't let another child die. He couldn't walk away from a chance to save his people.

"Where is the woman?"

"She is being translocated to the Grand Mourian Ball."

Raeder took a deep breath and straightened, his hand fisted around the tiny shoe. He would keep it safe as he hadn't kept the child who had worn it safe. It would remind him that he had failed and that he couldn't fail again, ever. Even if it meant using the woman they'd found.

"What is the closest Star-Strider to Mouria?"

"Traiden's ship, *The SunRunner*."

"I want him there now. No one is to touch the woman." If Illusions was right, she was his by right of birth, and he would exercise his right to have her. And the Stars help Illusions if she wasn't the key to reenergizing the Rilirian Field, because he would destroy each and every one of them if she wasn't.

Kael watched the last shred of boyhood fade from Raeder's face and felt the pain of loss. The laughter and light in his prince's eyes was gone. His childhood friend was dead. A warrior forged from the death and destruction of his people had taken his place.

"Anything else?" Kael asked.

Raeder nodded. "Get two more Striders to Mouria. The security around this woman is to be impenetrable." He opened his hand and stared at the tiny shoe. Tears burned in his eyes, but they would never fall. He would hold the pain close and use it. Whatever he had to do, his people would be safe.

"No child is going to lose her life again because our defenses were weak. Never again."

He would use the woman to bolster the defenses protecting his people if that were possible. But this was the last time. Men and Striders would protect the Allourian Alliance with intelligence and power. His family and people were through depending on fantasies.

He translocated back to his Star-Strider, *The Summit*. He had a woman to snare and defenses to build. And the memories of a world that no longer existed were captured in the tiny shoe lost in his fisted hand.

* * * * *

"You won't believe it. It's so real. Except for the sensations being a bit muted you'd never know it was simulated. You can't imagine sex that good."

Aleea NaDeera's mind replayed Gabria's words as she tilted her head so the Illusions proprietress could use the dermaject she held. Hopefully it wasn't a lie. Her whole life's savings were riding on this fantasy.

There was a small sting at the base of her neck. She lifted her head and rubbed the spot.

“You’ll start feeling the effects soon. The arousal will be intense.”

“What is it?” She nodded at the small injector Gabria held.

“A concentrated dose of male pheromones. When you meet Prince Raeder, you’ll know.”

She nodded, hoped she looked more sure on the outside than she felt on the inside. Prince Raeder. The fantasy man of her dreams.

Dread and excitement in equal proportions swirled through her.

What was she thinking? Aleea NaDerra, credential checker for Centera’s Interstellar Port Authority, was a quiet, introverted, safe and sane woman. She went home each night to her singlet, watched holo-vision, and had dreams she never shared with anyone. She consistently turned down the sexual advances of Phripil Halak, the only man who ever issued such invitations to a woman like her. She didn’t date princes.

So what was she doing dressed in a gossamer sheath? It was clear from her tight nipples to the vee of her legs that she wore nothing underneath.

Who ever heard of a Port Authority worker spending their life’s savings on a neural-induced virtual reality fantasy?

Of course, the setting was an interstellar ball. It would be filled with powerful people from every known dimension and galaxy. And one of those powerful men, an Allourian Prince named Raeder, would find her irresistible. How could *she* resist *that*?

“Are you ready?”

Ready to faint. She clamped her lips together to keep from saying the words out loud.

“Aleea?”

“Sorry.” Hopefully her smile didn’t look as sickly as it felt. “I think I’ve got a huge case of stage fright. Ridiculous, right? This is a cyber-fantasy. It’s happening inside my own mind. What’s to be afraid of?”

Gabria opened her mouth, but Aleea waved her to silence. “Don’t worry about me. I can have my mental meltdown while I’m having my fantasy. It shouldn’t interfere with the great sex or anything, right? And you did promise it would be great sex.” It had better be stupendous sex for the price she was paying.

The taller woman’s smile was slow. “Sex beyond anything you could ever imagine. All you have to do is walk through the portal.”

Aleea took a deep breath and turned back to the gateway in front of her.

“I can’t believe I’m doing this.”

“Until you step through the portal, you aren’t.”

Aleea grinned. “You’re right. And I’m going to do what I’ve told myself for years to do. I’m going to be exciting, give up being a coward, and squeeze life out of every moment.”

“I’d say the first step is taking the first step.”

There was a bite to the other woman’s voice. No doubt she had other customers to work with.

“Thank you.”

Gabria smiled and nudged her forward. “Enjoy yourself.”

Aleea nodded, closed her eyes and stepped into her fantasy. When she opened her eyes, she had to bite her lip to keep from gasping aloud.

Stars, it was more than she had ever imagined. The walls glowed with a rose-colored light. There were races she recognized, the amphibian race of Mouria and the teddy bear-like beings of Gadrian. There were others she didn’t and that was saying something. Centera wasn’t a major stellar hub, but it got a lot of traffic from different dimensions and galaxies. She’d never seen the insectoid beings standing on the open balcony overlooking the sea or the multi-armed blue humanoids across the room.

Everyone was dressed in fabrics that shone like jewels or were plush and sumptuous looking. As bare as she felt, she was showing nothing compared to the intergalactic servers, men and women, who circulated around the room. A woman walked up to her, dual breasts on one side bare, her skirt barely long enough to cover her backside.

“Refreshment?”

Aleea smiled, shook her head and started down the stairs. She’d never felt more out of place in her life and that was saying something.

She tried not to stare at the man walking up the stairs toward her. He should have just left his leggings home. His penis was small but that wasn’t stopping him from showing off its rigid little length.

“Like what you see?” His face was flushed, his voice slurred and his eyes unfocused.

“Excuse me?” She met his bulbous gray-green eyes and wished she hadn’t. He made her skin crawl. Someone really should take pity on the man and let him know he wasn’t showing anything anyone would want.

“If you like it, it’s yours.” He thrust his hips forward.

She swallowed hard and bit her lip. Laughing at him wouldn’t get the reaction she was after. Whoever he was, he wasn’t part of her fantasy. He was more like a nightmare. Where was her dream prince when she needed him?

“Excuse me.” She hurried down the stairs past him.

* * * * *

Lips thinned, Raeder stayed in the shadows on the terrace. The usual mix of those anxious to be seen or to be with those worth seeing filled the ballroom.

Suddenly she was there. She shimmered into being at the top of the steps. He didn't just see her, he felt her. Desire sizzled through his veins. He wanted her.

He watched the little Neurian approach her and fire burned in his gut. He'd like to hang the little male by the insubstantial jewels he was so intent on advertising.

His gaze was drawn back to the woman.

Aleea. The holo-images he'd studied hadn't done her justice. She was small, delicate. Golden-brown hair fell to her waist. He wanted to grab her little pointed chin and force her to look at him, to acknowledge him as her rightful mate. She didn't know it yet, but she was his.

He wanted her. His cock was hard just from looking at her. He could imagine her channel, hot and tight, squeezing his erection. As small as she was, he would have to take her carefully, at first. Later it could be as fast and fierce as they both wanted it. And she would want it as rough and primal as he did.

She looked like a living flame as she walked down the entrance steps. Her dress was vivid red, molded to her like a second skin. The skirt covered her thigh without an inch to spare. If she raised her arms, her nipples would spring free.

He wanted to kill the men staring at her. They were thinking the same things he was. *Would her breasts be creamy? How dark were her nipples? Would they be plump or thin, long or not?*

Her breasts would fill his mouth. *How sensitive would her nipples be?*

He growled low in his throat and strode out of the shadows.

Aleea stopped halfway down the stairs. The way everyone was watching her, she might as well be naked. She wanted to reach up and cover her breasts, but at the same time it made her stomach clench and her breasts tighten to have so many eyes on her. It was thrilling and terrifying at the same time. Wouldn't that surprise the people who knew her? She was the one who always stayed in the background.

The hairs on the back of her neck stood up and she shivered. Glancing over the crowd, she saw a huge, powerfully built man striding toward her. She felt his eyes rake her. His expression was unreadable, but she could feel his eyes on her breasts. Her nipples stabbed against the thin material of her dress. When his eyes dropped to her thighs, she grew moist.

It couldn't be Raeder? She was in trouble. He was huge. Male perfection from his chiseled features to his heavily muscled frame. Just looking at him made her melt inside. If he wasn't Raeder, she wanted to change her fantasy. Whatever happened, she wanted him to be part of it. Lips trembling, she smiled.

He didn't smile back. The crowd parted before him.

She pressed her hand to her suddenly queasy stomach. Stars, what was she supposed to do? What was she thinking? She wasn't ready for *this*, wasn't ready for him. He looked at her as if she belonged to him, as if she was his next meal.

Heat built between her thighs. She pressed her legs together but that made it worse. She wouldn't mind being his next meal. Talk about exciting, but scary too.

She looked away and hurried down the steps. Shivers skated down her spine. She could feel his gaze like a touch. Even across the crowded room his presence was palpable. He was more man than she could handle even if he was only a fantasy. Yet she wanted to try. She hadn't said a word to him and he was already the most interesting man she'd ever met.

The choice of meeting him or not was taken from her.

Raeder caught her arm and pressed his hand to the small of her back as she took a half-step back. He'd come to Mouria for her and he wouldn't leave without her.

He looked down at her and his cock gave a hard jerk. Her breasts and nipples were starkly outlined, more showcased than hidden by the flaming material. His mouth watered. He wanted her pebbled nipples in his mouth, to feel them against his tongue. They looked long and plump. Delicious.

Staring up at him, her black eyes were huge and wary. He could feel her trembling even though her chin was lifted defiantly.

He looked back toward the open doors to the terrace and the gardens. Outside she would be away from the hungry eyes watching her, exposed only for him.

She tried to step back.

He wrapped his arm around her waist. She wasn't going anywhere except with him. He wanted to lay her on the ground, pull the offending material from her breasts and feast on her. He wanted to suck the hard tips, to swallow her breasts whole.

Teeth gritted, he controlled his thoughts. He could be a gentleman—for now!

"Dance with me."

Aleea couldn't catch her breath. Her coworkers would be shocked if they knew what she was thinking. She wanted to strip off her dress and bare her breasts to his hot eyes. She wanted to feel his lips sipping, his teeth biting, his mouth suckling. Her nipples were hard and hurting. And that wasn't the only place she felt achy.

Her sheath clenched. She was wet, hot. Her skin felt feverish, almost prickly. What would he do if she pushed her breasts against his heavily muscled chest? What would it be like to have his cock buried inside her?

She'd never thought about doing anything so dangerous before. He was more man than she had ever imagined. Could she handle him?

He stripped her with his crystal green eyes.

If he wasn't Raeder, it didn't matter. She wanted him.

“What’s your name?” she asked.

He shuddered at the sound of her husky voice. He wanted to hear it again, to hear her moan his name as he drove his hard cock into her tight sheath. He’d never before experienced such instant need.

“Raeder.”

Her breath caught. It was him. Gabria should have warned her.

His arm curved around her, his hand firm and hot on her backside. He took the decision to dance or not from her as he swept her onto the dance floor. It wasn’t enough but it would have to do for now. Soon, she would be naked, open, and ready for him.

The music, dark and sensual, wrapped around them in a glide of notes as he caught her hand in his. He cupped her buttocks in one hand, squeezed as he pulled her snug against him. He breathed in her scent, felt it spread through his blood like an aphrodisiac. Where he was hard she was soft.

His cock was rigid against her abdomen. As she moved her hips back and forth she rubbed against it. He felt huge. What would it feel like to have him inside, stretching her, making her feel like the only woman in the world? She’d read about women being with men like him. Now it was her turn.

She blew out a breath. She was feeling more than hot. Whatever had been in that dermaject was working.

“What’s your name?” he asked, his gaze piercing.

She wanted to look away but couldn’t. He had more power in his gaze than most people had in their whole bodies.

“Alea.” She nearly groaned as his hips rocked against her. His cock was long and thick, hot against her, their clothes no barrier.

“Just Alea?”

She hesitated. It all seemed too real, his powerful shoulders and broad chest under her hands. His erection felt like steel. Somehow, telling her last name seemed very intimate and very real. Too real.

“Alea. Tell me your last name.”

His voice, low and slightly rough raised chill bumps on her arms. His eyes were beautiful. Hot crystal green burning her.

“NaDeera.”

“A good Centeran girl.”

“Usually.” If her coworkers saw her tonight they wouldn’t call her *good*. And wasn’t that why she’d chosen Illusions? She didn’t want to be good any more.

His squeezed the firm swell of her buttocks, pulled her tighter against his erection. He needed to be inside her. Before the night was over he would claim her as his own.

She lifted into his touch. Her fantasy was already worth the money she'd paid. To have a man like him want her, what more could she ask?

"When you're not good, what are you?" His voice was a dark, dangerous lure.

"I don't know, but I'd like to try being wicked with you." And she would. She wanted to try *everything*. Everything she'd read, seen or imagined.

"You want to be wicked?"

She licked her lips and nodded. She felt wanton, free to do and be anything she wanted. And tonight she wanted everything he had to offer. "You can show me how to be really bad, can't you? I've always dreamed about being really naughty."

"This isn't a dream."

She wished it wasn't. Ducking her head, she hid from his penetrating gaze. She wanted to concentrate on the hot hand cupping and squeezing her ass. It was easy to shut out the others dancing around them. Everything about him filled her senses. His scent, his hard muscles, his erection pressed against her. Every step rocked his pelvis against her, rubbed his hard length against her middle. Heat emanated from him, wrapped around her. Stars, he wanted her. *Her*.

The music flowed to a close. Around them other couples separated and drifted away. She forced herself to step back.

"Thank you for the dance."

His hand tightened on her waist. He frowned and his eyes narrowed. There was no way he would let her walk away from him. "Dance with me again."

Again? Stand in his arms as tingles of electricity sparked through her? Why not? She nodded as the music started again. It was a faster song. The beat primal. She could feel it in her chest. She wanted to be closer to him, wanted to be alone with him. She'd heard women talk about wanting a man the moment they saw him but she'd never experienced it herself, until now.

Raeder pulled her against him, swept her along with him. He twirled them in a fast circle forcing her to cling to him.

She looked up and was trapped by his intense stare.

He spun them again, and again. The crowded ballroom gave way to a dark, deserted terrace. Lights cast shimmering diamond paths over the water of Mouria's ocean. Overhead the sky was almost black, lit from below by the lights of the planet's capital. Thunder rumbled in the distance. Water lapped at the shore, more vigorous under the constant breeze that rustled leaves and played with her hair.

She couldn't look away from the stark lust in his eyes; she shivered as his hands moved to her hips. Her lips felt full and tingly. She felt wet, ready, aching. Was this what other women experienced? She felt suddenly bereft. Why couldn't she feel this with a real man?

"I'm going to have you, Aleea." It was her name, a threat and a promise all at once. "You'll leave with

me, won't you?"

She started, pulled from her dark thoughts by his question. Leave with him? Her fantasy hadn't included leaving the ball.

Raeder felt her startled jump. He stopped her when she tried to step back. Whether she agreed or not, she was coming with him. It would be better if it was her choice, but in the end it didn't matter. She belonged to him.

Holding her wasn't enough. He wanted to feel her under him, her cunt tight around his throbbing cock. His blood was on fire. He was hard and hurting.

He spun her in another circle, used her imbalance to pull her even closer. Her nipples were stiff points poking into his chest. He grabbed her ass with both hands, yanked her against him and thrust his hips forward, grinding against her.

She shuddered and her hips moved forward in a reflex action to cradle him.

Primitive satisfaction twined through him. Tonight, she would be his.

The music segued into a slow sexually charged song. He rocked his pelvis against her, biting back a groan when her breasts flattened against his chest. He'd never wanted a woman like he wanted this one. He hadn't expected it to be so fast, so consuming. "Come with me."

Had he meant that the way it sounded? Her legs felt weak. Her insides trembled. Her breasts were heavy and her nipples hurt. She was having a hard time remembering this was a fantasy. She had seduced herself before she ever stepped into Raeder's arms. The dermaject Gabria had used worked really well.

"I want to sink my cock into your tight cunt." He pushed his thigh between her legs, pulled her forward to ride him. He buried his face in her hair. "I can feel you against me. Hot and wet. You want me inside you. Hot. Tight. Filling you."

His breath was moist against her neck. He nuzzled her ear, caught her earlobe in his teeth and nipped.

"Yes." She breathed the word.

"I want to fuck you all night long." His words stoked the fire inside her.

She pushed her breasts against his unyielding chest and rubbed back and forth. A moan escaped her. It was so much more than she'd ever had, but wasn't as much as she wanted. She wound her arms around his neck, pulled herself up on her toes and rocked her pelvis forward. Her dress, her only clothing, moved up, bared her to him.

His cock was a hard ridge between her nether lips. His treads were rough against the tender folds of flesh between her legs. She moaned as she rode him. She'd never felt anything so good and they hadn't done anything yet.

"I..."

His mouth covered hers, devoured. His tongue thrust into her mouth stealing her breath. He stroked in and out each thrust deeper, harder, faster, filling her mouth more. He didn't want her to think.

"Come with me."

"Yes."

Eyes heavy-lidded, he lifted his head. He ran his finger over her satiny lower lip. Even if she weren't the woman Illusions had found for him, he wouldn't leave without her tonight.

Her tongue slid out. She couldn't resist licking his finger. Her eyes closed as she savored the salty tang of his skin.

Desire knotted his gut. Sweat broke out all over his body. He needed his cock sheathed in her heat. He needed to feel her hot and wet, milking his length as he pumped into her.

He ran his finger along her bottom lip, trailed it to her chin. He pushed the fingers of one hand deep into her hair, cradled her head. He dropped his other hand to her ass, keeping her tight against his rigid shaft.

"Open your mouth."

Her nerve endings were so sensitive the brush of his breath on her lips felt like a caress.

His stare was steady and unblinking.

Her lips throbbed. She was surrounded, overwhelmed and she loved it. There was no doubt in her mind that he was completely focused on her. The full force of his personality directed at her.

With a sigh she surrendered the last of herself to him and parted her lips. She wanted him and she wasn't going to be denied. This was her fantasy.

Triumph flashed in his eyes as he lowered his head to hers. His gaze trapped hers, didn't let her look away. His tongue filled her mouth, the caress wet and rough.

He pulled back. "Suck my tongue." His order was low and harsh. He needed to feel her accept him even in this small way. She had to know she was his. He lowered his head and captured her mouth with his.

Eyes wide, she did as he said.

His hips undulated against her. His pelvic bone hit her clit with each forward motion.

She gasped, fought for breath. Her vagina tightened, wet heat gathered between her legs.

"Give me your tongue." His tone was harsh. He didn't give her time to answer. His lips were hard, forced hers more fully open. His tongue swept into her mouth and back out.

"Give me your tongue. Now." His voice was a low rasping growl. He could feel her need in the turgid nipples against his chest, the wet heat against his cock.

Shy, hesitant, she pushed her tongue between her lips, touched his and retreated. The action felt more intimate than sex had with other men.

“More.” He rocked his hips against her. “Ride me while you suckle me.” He locked his mouth to hers.

She pushed her tongue into his mouth, cried out as he raked her unsuspecting flesh with his teeth.

He drew on her with steady pressure, his tongue darted around hers.

She felt wicked, free. Her tongue was captured in his mouth.

His hips pumped against her with powerful thrusts. He used his grip on her ass to pull her forward, her pussy molded to his cock.

She shuddered and pressed harder against him, rocking forward, matching his rhythm. Her nipples were tight, pinched. The friction made her breath catch. Power surged through her in a growing tidal wave.

He growled, his chest vibrating against her breasts. He caught her lower lip between his and sucked. His teeth bit. He laved the sting with moist strokes of his tongue.

“Please.” She needed more. Needed to be closer. Her clothes and his, kept them separated. She needed to feel him against her, had to have his cock buried deep, stretching and filling her.

His tongue invaded her mouth, filled her then retreated. Yes. He needed her to want him, to need him.

She followed the retreating marauder.

Yes. She wanted him, was showing him she did. He rewarded her by suckling her tongue hard. His hands closed over her breasts. He squeezed the firm mounds. His thumbs pushed between their bodies to rub and rotate her nipples. He wanted to feel them, not the material hiding them from him.

He pushed the material down, found her nipples with his thumbs and rubbed. A savage smile lit his face when she moaned.

She shuddered and groaned, surged against him. Sweet moisture rained down from deep inside her. She clenched her thighs around his leg. Oh, Stars. She couldn’t come. Not in public. Not where anyone could watch.

She tried to pull back.

He wouldn’t let her.

He licked her neck, savored the sweet-salty taste of her. A savage impulse made his muscles harden and he nipped her soft skin. He wanted to make her a part of him. His instant need of her couldn’t be real, but it was.

She jumped, winced as her clit hit his thigh.

“Lean back.”

Feeling drugged, she forced her heavy eyelids up and met his smoldering gaze. She hadn't expected this. Hadn't known she could be swept away by her own desire and his.

He rocked her even harder on his thigh. "Lean back," he ordered again.

She loosened her grip on his neck and did as he ordered. Her nipples scraped against the neck of her dress. She felt burned as he stared at her breasts.

He licked his lips. His face was flushed, his eyes half closed.

"I need you," she moaned. "Your mouth. Your teeth. Biting. Sucking." Her sheath clenched. Spasms rocked through her. The underside of her nipples rode the neckline of her gown, abrading them each time he surged against her. It hurt in a wonderful way.

She bit her lip to keep from crying out.

He couldn't resist the long, plump nipples riding the edge of her gown. He lowered his head, closed his mouth over one and sucked.

She jerked against him and cried out. She'd never felt anything like it. Heat, pressure.

He pulled at her nipple, trapped it in his hot, wet mouth. His tongue toyed with it. The way she moved against him, the sounds she made, everything she did made him hotter.

She grew wetter. This was what other women talked about. No wonder they raved.

He moved to her other nipple, drew it into his mouth and sucked.

She moaned, arched into him. She'd be happy if he suckled on her nipples forever.

He released her nipple and lifted his head. A smile curved his hard mouth at the sight of her flushed face and red, swollen nipples. It was a start. He would make her burn and then he would make her come.

She bit her lip to keep from protesting. Maybe he had something even better in store for her.

He rocked her against his thigh, butted it against her pussy and clit. They would savor the fullness of passion together but he wanted her to know the first taste here and now.

She moved against him, increasing the pressure. She liked that, too.

He slid his hand down her hip to the hem of her dress. He caressed over the front of her thighs, insinuated his hand between them. Under his hand, her skin felt soft and supple. Had anyone ever been this perfect before?

Her legs shifted giving him more room.

He trailed his hand up the inside of her thigh lifting the skirt of her dress as he did. He raked his fingers through the tight curls covering her mound. Soft, wet folds of flesh parted, giving access to his seeking fingers. He almost groaned. Her body was showing him how much she wanted him.

She arched into his touch, her breath catching at the fire of his touch.

Something savage wrestled for freedom inside him. His fingers stroked her wet, passion-swollen folds. He wanted to take her, knew she was ready for him. He wanted to mark her as his so no one would have any doubt she belonged to him.

With long strokes, he teased her pussy. She moaned, her hips following his stroking fingers.

He wanted to be inside her. Burned with the need. He stroked the small, hard knot of her clit.

He pressed his fingers against her entrance. The ring of muscle resisted but he persisted until his finger slid into her. Blast, she was tight. She would burn him alive, squeeze him until he was ready to explode.

She moaned, stared up at him. Inside her, his finger felt huge. She burned. There was so much pressure. It wasn't uncomfortable exactly, but almost. And it was only his finger.

For the first time she felt a tinge of fear. Would she be able to take his cock? She wanted to try.

Her lips were full and red. Her nipples bare above the red material of her dress.

He loved seeing her nipples ride the low neckline.

He looked down. His arm looked dark and huge between her thighs. His finger was lodged inside her, her inner muscles convulsing around his invading finger.

He wanted her cunt clenching his cock.

He moved his finger in and out of her. Soon it would be his cock that filled her.

The rasp of his flesh against her was more than she could stand. Her body vibrated as fire raced through her veins, an orgasm shaking her. She fell forward against him gasping as tremors shook her body.

He felt the power surge in her, through her as her muscles tightened and her breath broke on a sob. He continued to finger-fuck her. He'd never had a woman more responsive to his touch. The injection of pheromones had worked better than he had thought it would.

Slowly, he eased his finger out of her and rocked her against his thigh. When she could breathe he stepped back.

Chapter 2

"Let's go." He adjusted her dress to cover her then caught her hand in his. He adjusted himself with the other. He strode off the balcony, down a winding staircase and into the shadowed garden filled with the sound of fountains, and around the building. He didn't want anyone in the ballroom looking at her, wanting what was his and his alone. Flushed with her orgasm, her unique sexual scent heavy around her, she was too tempting. And she was his alone to enjoy.

He felt cool satisfaction at the feel of her hand in his. When they reached Allouria, they would consummate their union with the power of Allourian Crystal to bind them. With her tied to him, the

Rilirian Field would hold until a true defense could be built. And he would have the pleasure of bringing her to orgasm again and again.

Aleea glanced over her shoulder. She hadn't even thought about the other people in the ballroom. Had anyone seen them?

She shook her head. Why was she worrying about other people? This wasn't real. It was a fantasy created just for her. She could feel embarrassed at being so uninhibited in a public place when it mattered. When it was real. Right now she didn't want to lose the hot, heavy feeling of need that pulsed through her. Besides, naughty or not, the thought of being caught added to the excitement.

She couldn't believe it, he'd made her come. Her legs shook as he pulled her along with him. Had those feelings really come from her? How in the galaxy had he made her feel what she had?

At the front of the building Raeder strode past the translocator operator and stopped at the holo-control panel.

"Open the portal to *The Summit*," he ordered the young Mourian.

Beside him Aleea shivered. The salty ocean breeze teased her bare arms, shoulders and chest. The friction of the dress against her nipples was driving her crazy. It kept rubbing them, making them burn.

She tugged her hand free of Raeder's grip, reached up and pressed her hands to her breasts. She closed her eyes and sighed. If she had to, she was going to walk holding herself until she was somewhere she could take the torturous dress off.

Raeder grabbed her arms, his grip punishing.

Her eyes flew open as he stepped in front of her. She caught sight of the young amphiboid male staring at her and felt heat rush up her neck and into her cheeks. Blast it. This was a fantasy. Why did she feel embarrassed? It wasn't like he was a real person.

Raeder pulled her hands from her breasts. "Don't touch yourself in public." Though spoken low, Raeder's words were an order that couldn't be ignored. His tone demanded obedience. He turned back and glared at the Mourian. Aleea was his and he didn't share.

The young male jumped and got very busy with the translocator controls. The holo-screen shimmered into being and the young male's webbed fingers flew over it.

"I don't know why you're so upset," Aleea muttered. Did they program cyber-characters with feelings?

Raeder's eyes dropped to her breasts. He raised his left hand, lifted her breast free of the clinging sheath, caught her nipple between his thumb and forefinger and pinched.

Her lips parted and her eyelids drooped. Whether it was the fantasy or the dermaject, everything he did to her felt good.

He looked up from her nipple caught in his fingers. Heat curled through his abdomen at the sight of her face twisted in a sensual grimace. "I don't want him or anyone else staring at this." He tugged at the tender tip and her breath hissed from between her clenched teeth. "I don't share what's mine."

She tried to gather her thoughts, but his fingers pinching her tender nipple made it impossible. “He wouldn’t look.” Her voice emerged, a choked whisper.

Raeder enveloped her whole breast with his hand and squeezed. He lowered his head and kissed her once. He’d never felt this fierce and possessive about anyone before. “He would look and he would want.”

The portal opened. He pulled the sheath back over her breast before ushering her through in front of him.

She was wrenched from Mouria and flung through space. Ice condensed in her veins. She couldn’t breathe. Everything went black.

It felt like she hit a wall. Air exploded into her lungs. Fire raced through her veins, not so much melting the ice as exploding it. Sweat beaded across her forehead and upper lip, between her breasts. Her nipples, tight from the cold, stiffened almost unbearable as heat flushed her body.

Need slammed into her. Her vagina clenched in search of a cock to fill it.

She turned in a slow circle. What had happened? Raeder wasn’t with her. Wonderful. She was as hot and needy as she’d ever been in her life and her fantasy man had disappeared. The room was lovely but she didn’t care about green, gold-veined marble floors or tapestries that were worth more than she would make in her lifetime. What she cared about was Raeder and he wasn’t here.

Stars above. It wasn’t just heat or need or desire. It was pure unadulterated lust. She was burning up. She fanned herself as she looked around the room.

She shifted, cried out when the perspiration-dampened sheath rubbed against her burning nipples. Hot, sharp, the sensation started at her nipples and arrowed to her womb, made her vagina clench again.

“Blast.” She moaned and clamped her legs together. The feeling intensified and she groaned. What was happening? Where was Raeder? She needed him now, blast it, and this was her fantasy.

Frantic, she looked around the room again. The shadowed lagoon caught her eyes. All rocks, waterfalls and plants, it was perfect. Of course as hot as she was, it would probably go up in steam the moment she touched the water, but so what. Raeder wasn’t here to help her. She’d have to help herself. And if she had to go looking for him she was getting her money back. This was not the fantasy she was paying for.

She ripped the sheath over her head and raced to the water. Unsure of the depth she lowered herself to the side and slipped under the surface with barely a ripple.

Relief. Cool water dulled the heat between her thighs and in her throbbing nipples.

Her toes touched the bottom and she pushed off.

Water caressed her face, neck, and chest. Her breasts were so tight it felt as if they were being squeezed. Her pulse seemed to be centered in her nipples and between her legs. Where was Raeder?

Eyes closed she laid back and let the water hold her. She bobbed her breasts under the water, laughed as they popped above the surface again. She liked the cool air on them. It made her nipples burn.

Where was Raeder?

Thinking about him made her bones melt. Stars, he was big. Would his cock be huge? It had felt like it against her abdomen and between her thighs when she'd ridden the hard length of it through his clothes.

Her insides clenched. Would he be too big for her? Could he force his way into her tight passage? Would he? It had been a long time for her and he was a whole lot of man.

She wanted to taste him.

Her eyes popped open. She'd never thought about taking a man in her mouth before. Did she really want to do that with him?

The image of him standing before her, with her kneeling at his feet, filled her mind. She could see his huge cock caught in her hand as she lowered her mouth to him. Her nipples hardened even more. Her vagina clenched. She wanted to do it. She wanted to taste him.

Just lying here in the water felt good. It buoyed her breasts, encircled them like a lover's hand. Actually, it was better than good. But Raeder's hands would be great. Mmmmm. His hands lifting and squeezing. When he pinched her nipple on Mouria...

She shivered and clamped her legs together. She wanted him to do that again. He'd pinched the tender tip of her breast and electricity had jolted through her.

She writhed in the water, a sensual smile tilting her lips.

* * * * *

Raeder strode through the corridors of his ship toward his private chambers. Rage smoldered and grew inside him. Aleea was there and safe but only because of the skill of his crew. The translocator mistake, if it had been a mistake, had been made on Mouria.

The young male who had operated the translocator had disappeared, but he wouldn't be able to hide forever. When the men sent to track him found him, he would tell what he knew or forfeit his life.

Raeder scanned his chambers as he stepped into them. His gut clenched when he didn't immediately see Aleea. Where was she?

He looked toward the pool and need slammed into his gut. Lying on her back, her breasts bobbed in the water. Long and dark, her nipples stabbed into the air. Eyes closed, she writhed in the water, the motion unbelievably sensual.

His mouth watered and his hands fisted. His reaction to her was unprecedented. Just looking at her, knowing she was naked and waiting for him made his cock hard.

He shed his clothes as he walked across the room, his eyes never leaving her breasts. Her nipples were a siren call to him. The water, warm and silky, closed around him as he slid into the pool behind her. His lips grew fuller, darker as he closed his hands over the firm mounds of her breasts. His cock thumped against his abdomen as her nipples stabbed into his palms.

He squeezed her breasts, fought the urge to turn her toward him and swallow them whole. On Mouria,

she had wanted him and she didn't shrink from him now. When they reached Allouria he would bind her to him for all time in every way possible.

"Raeder," she cried his name. "Take me now. Push your cock into me. I want to feel you inside me."

"Soon," he promised. He wanted to bury his cock deep in her as she asked, but he'd felt how tight she was, barely able to take one finger. He would have to prepare her well, possibly de-enhance his cock for her to take him.

He needed to be inside her. Needed to feel her squeezing and milking his shaft as her liquid heat bathed him. He was already close to coming.

His hands tightened on her breasts, his grip almost punishing as he squeezed her tender mounds.

"Raeder." She whispered his name.

His hands swallowed her breasts. He kneaded their fullness, wanted to latch onto the distended tips and never let go. Would his need of her ever diminish or would it continue to grow? He couldn't imagine needing her, wanting her, more than he did right now.

She loved the feel of his callused hands on her. When he opened his hands and rolled her nipples with his palms, she started. Sensation shot from her turgid crests to her womb.

"Perfect," she purred. She couldn't stop, had to move. Her pelvis pulsed forward. Her back arched.

It was so real. There was nothing muted about what was happening to her. Maybe she hadn't understood what Gabria meant.

"Pinch my nipples," she directed, her voice breathless. She wanted more. She wanted the pleasure almost to the point of pain she had experienced for that brief moment on Mouria.

"Like this?" His voice was a low rumble. It vibrated through his chest and into her. He grasped her nipples in his fingers, his touch firm but not tight. Would she like sex a bit rough, like he did?

"Pinch them," she demanded pushing her breasts against his hands.

"Like this?" He caught her nipples, squeezed and rolled the tender flesh between thumb and forefinger.

"Yes!" She bucked and groaned, arched into his touch. Her legs scissored under the water. Her head fell back against his broad, hair-roughened chest.

He wanted to shout as he felt triumph growing in his chest. She liked what he was doing. Truly, she had been born to be his. He lifted his hands from her breasts.

"Don't stop," she cried out and thrust her breasts forward. She wanted his touch back. Her most secret dreams had been of a lover who wouldn't be afraid to be a little rough. She loved Raeder's hands on her, his fingers punishing her nipples. He was perfect for her.

A low growl rumbled from his chest. Her words, the way she arched her breasts up, silently begging for his touch made him feel powerful and humble all at once. He scraped callus-roughened thumbs over the

tips of her breasts and her hips jerked.

“You’re so sensitive. You respond to every touch.”

“Your mouth,” she whispered. “I need to feel your mouth on me.” She took a deep breath. If she didn’t have the courage now, she never would. “Biting me.”

He growled again, lower, louder.

The world spun. His mouth settled over her left breast. A hot velvet tongue laved around her nipple.

“Yes.” She squirmed against him. She could feel the texture of his tongue, soft yet rough, molding her flesh, sucking greedily on the swollen tip. Tingling, burning pleasure. Hot water and hotter tongue.

Her nipple stabbed into his mouth. He molded his tongue to it. Batted it. Licked.

Around and around, his tongue seared her flesh. But it wasn’t enough. She needed more. She’d dreamed of having a man feast on her breasts, bite her nipples. Dark dreams that made her hurt, the need was so intense.

“Harder,” she pleaded. She arched up, forced her breast deeper into his mouth. She wanted to experience her dreams, to feel his teeth nipping and tugging.

He sucked her breast deeper into his hot, greedy mouth. Crushed her nipple against the roof of his mouth. Savored her low keening moan. The sound was more erotic than anything he’d heard from any other woman.

“Mmmmm. Yes. Yes!” Her hips thrashed in the water.

He released her breast.

She shivered. “Don’t let go.”

Primitive feelings filled him. He wanted to mark her as his in ways no one could mistake. His teeth caught her right nipple and tugged, bit down to hold her as his tongue toyed with the very tip.

She gasped, tried to arch forward. “Yes. Oh Stars, yes.” Her nipple was pinched, tugged, pulled tight. It stung, almost burned. Hot strings of sensation connected her nipple to her channel.

He wouldn’t let her move, easily held her captive. He licked and nibbled her breast, across her chest to the other mound and laved around the turgid peak.

Her hips hunched forward. She felt the steel of his erection against her abdomen.

“I want you inside me, filling me,” she begged.

He opened his mouth over her breast. He sucked hard, pulled her nipple taut in his mouth. He released her only to bite the tip again.

She cried out at the sting. She was a temptation he didn’t want to resist. A small woman with full breasts and long nipples. His mate. He laved away the small hurt with his agile tongue.

She moaned and undulated against him. How did he know what to do? How had Gabriela known he was the perfect man for her?

Around and around. He rolled the tip with his tongue, nipped it again.

“Oh, Stars.” She couldn’t hold still. Didn’t know whether to flinch away or push closer. “More. I need more. More of you.” She grasped bulging biceps, her fingers digging into muscles of steel.

He groaned as he pulled her thighs around his waist. “Tell me you’re mine. Tell me you belong to me.” He needed to hear the words from her. She was his and he would never let her go, but he needed her to acknowledge that, to accept him.

She was spread wide, vulnerable, and open to him.

“Yes,” she moaned. “Take me, please.”

She didn’t know what she was agreeing to and he didn’t care. He would hold her to her word. His shaft found the groove between her pussy lips. He rode the wet channel, his pelvis grinding hard against her clit with each forward motion.

She couldn’t drag in enough air. Fire raced through her veins, concentrated between her thighs where his hot flesh burned her. She’d said she wanted a big man. Raeder was huge.

“Open your eyes. Watch as I take you.” His voice was guttural.

She shook her head. If this was muted, what would reality be like? She felt everything, felt too much. She was going to explode.

Teeth bit her left nipple, punishing it, pulling it, stretching it.

“Oh, Stars.” She pulled back. Her nipple pulled free. Sharp teeth raked the length making her burn. She was on fire with her need for him.

His tongue flicked it. Clever fingers found her pussy under the water and stroked, teasing between the folds to find her clit. He stroked the tight knot of nerves.

She bucked against him. A line of sensation connected her nipples, her sheath and clit. She was on fire, burning up.

“Please.” She arched into his touch, wanted more but he moved back, teasing her.

“Open your eyes.”

“No.” She shook her head. “It’s too much.”

He rubbed her clit, stroked her pussy and rimmed the opening of her vagina.

She rocked against him moaning.

“Do you want me here?” He pushed the tip of one finger just barely into her, stretching the small ring of

muscle he'd tested before. He had to fight himself to keep from sinking his finger deep into her channel. He ached to bury his cock in her, but he would ready her first. She was so small. When he sank into her clinging heat, he was going to lose his mind.

"Yes. Please," she begged.

"Open your eyes." His touch moved away from her aching flesh. He wanted her to watch him take her. He wanted no doubt in her mind that it was he who took her. He was the only man for her, ever.

What was he doing to her? She wanted him. Over her. Inside her.

His mouth was possessive, clever, and not quite gentle as he captured her other breast. He sucked hard. She liked it rough and he would give her everything she wanted. No other man would ever satisfy her. He would see to that.

Her hands fisted in his hair. She wouldn't let him stop. Not this time.

His mouth was hot and wet as he sucked her nipple deep into his mouth. Her nipple was a hard berry against his tongue. He wanted to drink her in. "Burn for me," he growled around her nipple.

Her hips pushed against him trying to force his finger deeper into her. Her inner muscles spasmed.

He pushed his finger farther into her welcoming heat.

She writhed against him. Stars, it felt huge, as big as a penis. Filling her.

The jut of his erection throbbed like a heartbeat against her abdomen. His cock felt as hard as granite yet silky.

Hesitantly, she opened her eyes and met his gaze. Her insides trembled. "I want you inside me, but I'm scared."

His expression in his eyes softened. A half-smile lifted the corners of his sensual lips. He cupped her face in his hand, stroked her lips with his thumb. His eyes followed the movement. He'd never experienced tenderness before her. She was a surprise to him in many ways.

"What are you afraid of?"

"That you won't fit inside me. That you will."

She shivered. Her stomach clenched. Her lips parted and her tongue darted out to taste his flesh. She licked at the rough skin of his thumb.

He pushed the digit into her mouth. "Suck it," he ordered quietly.

She did as he directed. A low hum vibrated in her throat.

"Your sheath will love my cock. You were made to take me." His eyes smoldered as he pulled his thumb almost free of her mouth. He pushed it back in, his eyes half-closed. Her channel, hot and wet, would swallow his cock as it was meant to.

She scraped her teeth along his digit as he pulled it back out. Looking at him from under her lashes she asked, "Does your cock taste anything like your thumb? Slightly salty?" She wanted to taste him.

His eyelids drooped and his color deepened. "You'll find out, but not now. I want to be inside you, embedded to the hilt when I explode." He blew on her nipple, smiled savagely when she shivered, her nipples jutting upward. "You're so responsive. It's like touching a dream. If we don't get out of the water, I'll take you here and I don't want that. I want you in my bed thinking about nothing but me."

He reached between her thighs, pushed his finger back into her hot, wet sheath. His expression was fierce. "You're tight. Tight and hot. Squeezing me. You'll take my cock in your cunt, won't you, baby? You'll make me come."

His head dipped down. He caught her lower lip and nipped, licked and sucked. He kept up the suction as he pulled away. There was a moist, popping sound as her throbbing flesh sprang free.

Her stomach clenched. Each bite was a surprise and she liked it. The sharp sting, the unexpectedness of it.

"Come on," he growled. He set her away from him and levered himself out of the pool. Reaching down, he caught her around the waist and lifted her out of the water. Another time they would make love in the pool, but not this time. Not the first time.

She gasped as he swung her into his arms.

It was like being swept away by a wave. All she could do was take a deep breath and wait to surface. It was wild and heart-jolting to be with him. Soon he would be inside her. Hot, hard, tight. Impaling her on his lance. And she couldn't wait.

She leaned into him, turned so she could rub her breasts against him. His hair was coarse, abrasive against her nipples. Eyes closed, she let her head drop back. He was perfect. Absolutely perfect.

Raeder left the room dark, lit only by the glows around the bed. Her nipples were dark and swollen from his mouth on them. Perfect.

With Alea held in his arms, he walked through the sonishower on his way to the bed.

He wouldn't let her change her mind. He needed her. He'd seen her and wanted her. He'd caught her scent, clean and slightly sweet, like honey with a hint of spice and he'd recognized her. It was deeper than physical looks. It was visceral.

Her hands found his chest and stroked.

His heartbeat sped, pounding against his breastbone at the stroke of her small, soft hands. Soon she would be stroking more than his chest.

She felt his heart rate increase, liked knowing she could affect him like that.

Leaning forward, he touched his tongue to the tip of one breast.

She jerked. A low mewling sound broke from her throat.

He batted the pebbled nub with his tongue, playing with it.

She arched forward, silently asking for more.

He smiled, the expression feral. He wouldn't risk losing his prize. He dropped his head and suckled her nipple. He alternately crushed it against the roof of his mouth and pulled his head back, dragging on the erotic nub of flesh.

She cried out. Her hips rocked frenziedly against his thigh. It was too much. She'd never felt anything like this. How was he doing this to her?

"Please, please, please." She moaned the plea as he switched his attention to her other breast and treated that nipple to the same rough play.

Alea shrieked as his mouth devoured her breast.

His sucking, his mouth pulling at her flesh, sent sensation knifing to her womb. Against her mound, his thigh was hard, rubbing against her clit with constant, searing pressure. She rocked against his knee, sobbed when he bit her nipple. Her stomach clenched as he licked it. She should be ashamed of the moisture wetting his thigh but she couldn't be. Not now. Not when she wanted more, needed more.

"Please," she begged.

"Please what?" His dark voice filled her ear as he pressed his thumbs over her nipples and rotated her tender flesh. He wanted to hear her say the words.

"I want you." She moaned and her eyes closed. She wasn't sure she would survive the night.

"Where do you want me? Do you want me inside you? That's where I want to be. I want to be so deep and tight inside you, you won't know where you end and I begin. Is that what you want? Do you want to feel my hard cock filling your cunt?" His voice was a dark whisper in her ear.

"Yes. Please, yes." She'd never wanted anything more.

Leaning forward, he suckled her nipple.

"Oh, Stars. Stars. Stars." She writhed and twisted against him.

He turned his attention to her other nipple.

Her legs trembled. The tips of her breasts burned. She was so hot and getting wetter.

"Lie down on the bed, baby." He wanted her stretched out before him, offering herself to him.

She turned around to do as he said.

Hard hands caught her hips. He turned her to face him, used his body to crowd her back until her legs came up against the bed.

“Delightful as your ass is,” he squeezed her buttocks, “it’s the front of you I want to see right now.” He positioned her on the bed on her back. His expression grew pained as he looked at her. He’d never seen anyone as alluring as she was, the firm mounds of her breasts capped by red tips.

He grasped her knees, pushed her legs apart. His chest expanded with a deep breath as he stared at her wet and shiny pussy. The folds were full and flushed.

“I don’t know if I can be gentle.” His voice was dark, almost harsh. He reached out and rubbed the tip of her nipple with his fingertip, his eyes never leaving her pussy. She was like velvet under his stroking finger.

She finally looked down and her eyes widened as she saw him for the first time. Stars, he was even bigger than he’d felt against her. Thick and long, the end darker than the shaft, his cock jutted from his body.

She swallowed hard as he reached for her. Big hands caught her and lifted her higher on the bed. She couldn’t look away from his erection. It jutted from his body, too big for her to hold in both hands. How would he fit it in her? The thought of him pushing that long, thick erection into her made her quiver from head to foot with anticipation and fear.

His hands wrapped around her ankles and pulled her legs farther apart. He wanted her open and available to him.

When she tried to resist, he didn’t allow it. The petals of her sex folded around the entrance to her channel looked like a flower. A flower he wanted to enfold him as he sank into its center. Swollen, her clit peeked from the top of her sex. As sensitive as she was, she’d explode the moment he put his mouth on her.

She shivered, unsure of what to do. She’d never felt like this before. It was a hot, melting sensation deep inside. Her channel contracted and more moisture leaked from her. Anywhere else, any other time, she would have been horrified. Now she felt wanton and wonderful.

He got on his knees on the bed between her legs. His eyes never left her mound and pussy. How tight would she be? It might take time, but she would accept all of him.

She couldn’t ignore the jutting power of him. Everything about him fascinated her and made her afraid all at once. His cock was too long and too thick. The one man she’d had sex with hadn’t been nearly as big and he’d filled her so tight it had been uncomfortable.

She inched back on the bed away from him.

He came down on top of her. He wouldn’t allow her to get away from him. He sucked at her soft, plump bottom lip.

“Trust me, Aleea. You can take me and you will.”

When he thrust his tongue deep in her mouth, she gasped. His tongue filled her mouth, stole her breath. He thrust in and out of her mouth, mimicking the sex act. There was so much he wanted to do to her, with her.

He strung a line of stinging kisses down her throat and chest, stopped when he caught her nipple in his teeth. He held it while his tongue tormented the tip, licking and batting at it. He could feast on her breasts forever and never tire of it.

She bit her lip to keep from screaming. She couldn't stop herself from writhing against him. There was so much pressure on her nipple.

"Suck it," she begged.

His cheeks hollowed. He pulled his head back as he nursed on her tender flesh. The aching nub broke free of his mouth with a moist popping sound.

She screamed. Her hips bucked and his hand was there.

He cupped her mound. His fingers stroked her pussy. He hurt, he needed to be inside her. "You're wet. Hot. Ready."

He didn't wait, didn't play. He pushed his finger through the ring of muscle guarding her and deep into her passage.

She froze, impaled on his finger. It was tight, wedged inside her. Before she could move, he pulled his finger out of her.

His hand stroked her pussy up to her swollen clit. "How sensitive is it?" He watched her as he stroked her clit. Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes half-closed and glazed, her lips parted. Her whole body jerked and trembled as he stroked her.

"Ummm..." The ululating wail broke from her.

"Tell me how sensitive your clit is." He plucked at the swollen knot of nerves. He wanted to hear her tell him how his touch felt. Hearing her tell him she wanted him, what he did to her was more erotic than he would have imagined.

She screamed and turned her face into the bed. Her back arched and her breasts thrust up at him. Electricity shot from his fingers to her womb. Every muscle contracted. Her sheath clenched, empty and aching.

"Please," she begged.

"Tell me how sensitive your clit is?" She *would* tell him.

"I'm...I'm going to come." She fought to get the words past the breath caught in her throat.

"You'll come for me now, won't you? I want you to come. I want to know you can't stop."

Her head thrashed back and forth on the bed. Her hips rocked against his rubbing, plucking, stroking fingers. She couldn't stop what was happening to her and didn't want to.

"I want to feel you come." He stroked his finger along her folds and pressed against the tight opening to her sheath.

“Your nether lips are sensitive too, aren’t they?” He rubbed the length of her pussy with his finger, played with the folds of flesh. He circled the opening of her vagina with his fingertip before pressing through the little ring of muscle and into her hot, narrow channel again. His muscles were tight with the restraint it took not to bury himself in her. He had to be gentle, had to help her this time.

“Your cunt wants me doesn’t it? It’s milking me.” His eyes closed as her cunt spasmed around his finger. She was hot and tight. Wet, clinging velvet.

A thrill chased through her to her core at his dark voice and earthy language. She liked it, wanted to hear more.

She arched against him, forced his finger to penetrate deeper. Her inner muscles contracted around him. She cried out as he pulled back, his finger easing out of her body.

“No,” she moaned. Her hips arched up, seeking him.

“How much does your cunt want my finger?”

“Yes. Please, yes.”

“That doesn’t answer my question. How much do you want my finger filling you?”

She blinked up at him, unsure how to answer. “I want you inside me. I ache to have you inside me.”

He eased his finger back into her.

She pushed up, moaning as he stroked in and out of her.

“Does your sheath want two of my fingers?” He pulled his finger out of her, so that it barely penetrated, moving the tip in and out. He wanted her on fire for him, so wet and ready he could slide his thick, turgid length into her with one fierce thrust.

She hurt. Her vagina clenched, empty, aching, raining down her need.

“Yes,” she growled and grabbed the bed cover with both hands. “I want two of your fingers inside me.”

“Your cunt wants two fingers inside it?”

Her eyes flew open. Why was he tormenting her?

His gaze seemed to penetrate to her very soul.

“Yes. My cunt wants two of your fingers inside it.” She felt wicked and liked it.

Her voice, wrapped around those words, he’d never heard anything so erotic. His finger slipped from her body and two fingertips circled her opening. He stroked up to her clit and rubbed.

“Oh, Stars,” she cried. She arched back. What he was doing was going to kill her.

“You can take two fingers, can’t you?” He stroked down, circled her vaginal opening again before

entering her.

Her hips rocked in a fast forward, backward motion. She gritted her teeth, sucked in a breath. It burned. His fingers stretched her flesh, felt huge inside her. She wasn't ready for this, wasn't ready for him.

"It's too much." She caught his forearm, tried to pull his hand from between her legs but couldn't budge his arm. It didn't quite hurt but it wasn't comfortable.

His fingers scissored inside her, not moving deeper but stretching her. As tight as she was, she would clamp him like a vise. He'd have a hard time lasting long enough to stroke into her more than once.

"You've got two fingers inside you. Just relax. Relax and let me come in further." He pushed a fraction of an inch deeper. She was so tight around his fingers. She would make him explode when he pushed his cock into her.

"No!" She cried out as the burning sensation grew. "I can't do this. I can't take your fingers. I can't take your cock. It's...you're too big."

His head dropped to hers, his mouth captured hers and he thrust his tongue into her mouth. He pushed in, pulled out, pushed in again. As wet and hot as she was, she wasn't wet enough or hot enough. He needed her burning, so wet he could slide into her despite how tight she was.

Unthinking she moved against him, cried out as the motion pushed his fingers deeper into her sheath. His tongue in her mouth muffled the sound.

He left her mouth, moved to her breast and closed his mouth over her nipple. He sipped at the plump tip, bit down.

She writhed and his fingers forged deeper in a burning slide.

"Your channel is mine, isn't it?"

"I..." She couldn't think to answer. His fingers were inside her, stretching her. Hot, searing.

"Tell me your channel is mine, made only to sheathe my staff," he demanded. He wanted to hear her say the words, to admit she belonged to him. Having her was the first step toward saving his people. He needed her. As much or more than that, he wanted her.

Her head thrashed back and forth against the bed. She wanted him, wanted what was happening. So why was she afraid?

"Tell me your nipples, your pussy and your channel belong to me." He scissored his fingers, stretching her inner passage even more. He pulled his fingers out of her clinging, quivering sheath, pushed them in again. He repeated the process over and over again.

"Tell me you're mine." She had to believe it.

She winced, moved helplessly on the bed as his fingers moved in her. He was dominating her. Was that what she wanted? Was that what the Illusions tests had said about her?

“I’m yours.” The words were a whisper. She couldn’t deny them, didn’t want to. Here and now, fantasy or not, she was his.

“Your breasts, nipples, clit and channel are for my pleasure, aren’t they?” Her words would tie her to him as surely as the sex act itself.

She met his fierce gaze. “Yes.”

“My cock is yours. I’ll use it to pleasure you.” He was hers and he wanted her to know it.

Her gaze flew down. She shuddered at the sight of his penis. It was longer, thicker, the head even darker. Only a couple of inches inside her, his fingers felt as thick as a pole. If he forced his cock into her, he’d kill her.

“You won’t fit.” She tried to shift away from him.

“I will. Trust me.”

He moved lower on the bed, his fingers sliding that fraction of an inch in and out over and over again. He lowered his mouth to her sweet heat, licked the taut flesh around his fingers.

“Mmmmm.” His low murmur vibrated against her as he tasted her unique flavor. He nuzzled her clit with his lips, closed his mouth over it and drew on it.

She bucked, the motion forcing his fingers deeper. She cried out as her inner tissues stretched and clenched. She couldn’t breathe.

His fingers filled her. His lips were outside, surrounding her, sucking her. Fire burned through her veins. He nibbled at the bundle of nerves and her hips rocked.

A stinging sensation and pure pleasure made her throb.

He sucked harder on her clitoris.

She exploded. Writhed against his mouth. Screamed.

He didn’t stop.

“No. No. No. No. No.” Her head tossed back and forth on the bed. His fingers were lodged deep inside her, feeding the fire. Her vagina milked him.

Raeder pulled his fingers from her hot, tight sheath. Teeth gritted, he grasped his manhood and guided it to her entrance. He was too big to enter her. He had to de-enhance, decrease the circumference of his cock, but he was hard and tight, his control almost gone.

He pressed the bulbous head of his penis against her opening and rocked, pushing against her, but he couldn’t force the blunt head of his cock into her without hurting her.

He couldn’t hurt her. It was too important that she be with him. He needed her to want him as much as he wanted her.

Teeth bared, he fought for control, concentrated on the pain, and felt his cock slowly decrease in circumference in his hand. The pressure was almost unbearable. Sweat stood out on his forehead, beaded his upper lip. His breathing was loud even to his own ears.

He pressed his cock against the entrance of her channel once more. The muscles resisted as he pushed. The thin tissue worked against him. "You can take me, Aleea. You can."

"I can't. I can't take you," she gasped, almost sobbing. She wanted him inside her, filling her, but he was too big.

Sparks spiraled through her as he pushed against her. What was he doing to her?

"You *can* take me." His voice was low, almost growling. He caught her shaking head, opened his mouth over hers and thrust his tongue into her mouth, stealing her breath. He rocked his hips, pushing against her. Pushed harder. He didn't want to hurt her but he couldn't stop. He had to be inside her.

She cried out, tried to shove him off her even as her legs wrapped around his. "I want to, but I can't."

"You will." He pressed forward. The tight ring of muscles resisted. He pressed harder and the knob of his cock forged through. He yelled as the pressure from her cunt clamped around the head of his cock; it was pleasure and pain.

Her breath rushed out of her lungs. She stared up at him, stunned. He was inside her. Huge.

The pressure was unbelievable. Even de-enhanced he filled her to capacity and only the head of his cock was inside her. Her flesh was stretched around him. She was hot and wet, her muscles tight, squeezing his cock until he was ready to explode. She was his now.

She shifted trying to ease the full, stinging sensation. She froze as the pressure grew. She was filled to the point of pain. Her inner muscles contracted. There was no give to his pulsing member. She tried to move back but was trapped under him, impaled by him. Fire burned inside her, through her.

Teeth bared, he groaned and pushed deeper. He couldn't hold still. He had to be inside her all the way.

"No!" Her head thrashed back and forth. She pushed against his chest but he didn't budge. She couldn't take him.

"Almost. So tight. Like satin fire. Wet and hot. You can take me. You can take all of me." He had to be all the way inside her. Had to feel her around him, milking his entire length.

"No. It burns. You're too big." She wanted all of him, but she couldn't do it.

"Just another minute, baby. You can take me."

He thrust again and his flesh filled her and filled her. He didn't stop, kept pushing until he was buried to the hilt, his great sword lodged deep in her sheath. He'd never imagined such pleasure.

Head back, teeth gritted he fought for control. He wanted to ride her hard but she wasn't ready for that. He shuddered as her muscles contracted around him. His hips jerked forward.

“Don’t move,” he ordered.

“I’m not.” Her vagina clenched. Released and clenched. She was so full, the pressure more than anything she could have ever imagined.

“You’re milking my rod.” The words hissed from him as he fought for control.

“I can’t stop.” She tried to breathe. Her inner muscles wouldn’t stop, kept tightening around his steely length. Stars shot through her, burst in showers of sparks that burned through her veins.

He pulled back slightly. Teeth gritted, he thrust back into her and swore. The friction and pressure on the sensitive head of his cock was tremendous. He’d never been in such a tight sheath. She was going to kill him.

She was going to die. The pressure, the heat. It was killing her.

“No more,” she pleaded, pushing against his shoulders. She’d thought she wanted him inside her but she hadn’t known what that meant. She did now. She couldn’t move. From above and from inside, he pinned her to the bed. She was wet from him and from herself. It was too real.

“You’re huge. You’re splitting me in half.” Her voice was barely a whisper. She couldn’t catch her breath.

Shaking with need, he lifted his chest off her. “Look at me.”

She shook her head. Her eyes burned with tears she didn’t want him to see.

He rocked his hips against hers, his penis rasping against her inner flesh.

She cried out, tried to move away and only managed to twist herself on his great cock. Her flesh burned, clenched tighter around him.

“Open your eyes.” He wouldn’t take no for an answer. He wanted her to watch them. Wanted to be able to watch her reaction.

Biting her bottom lip, she did as he said and looked at him.

He stared into her eyes as he reached between their bodies. “You’re hot and tight. Squeezing me.” He traced her flesh where it stretched around him. Amazing that someone so small, her cunt so tight, had been made for him.

She squirmed, not sure if she wanted to get away or move closer.

“It will get better. Try and relax your sheath then squeeze me. Relax then squeeze.” He needed to feel her embracing him, her channel grasping him.

“I can’t. You’re inside. Enormous. I’m stretched. Tight. Don’t move,” she pleaded. “It hurts.” Relax? With him wedged inside her? There was no way he’d ever be able to pull out.

“It won’t, if I can give you enough time. If you can work with me. I need you to milk my cock, Alea. Use your channel. Milk me.” His fingers traced from where he penetrated her to the apex of her sex. He

rubbed her swollen clit, his eyes steady on hers.

Her womb clenched at his words and touch. Unbelievably, her sheath squeezed tighter and his cock jerked inside her.

His neck arched, the muscles corded. His hips slapped against her as he moved deeper into her. His weight shoved her into the bed.

“Do you burn?” His voice was a low growl. He wanted to know her every experience. He wanted her tied to him in every way and he would start with sex.

“Yes.” She couldn’t look away; he wouldn’t let her go, his eyes staring into hers. She gasped as he reached between them and massaged her clit again. When he stroked it, she cried out and grabbed his biceps.

He watched her every reaction. The way her nipples jutted higher and their color deepened. Her lips were fuller, her eyes glazed. He couldn’t hold back much longer.

Fire raced along her nerve endings and centered low in her belly where he was embedded. And as he stroked, her sheath squeezed his thick pole. She felt something moist filling her.

“You feel like hot velvet.” He closed his eyes, fought not to shove himself into her. His cock pulsed, crushed in her hot depths.

More moisture pooled inside her. The burning eased. She felt better. Felt the beat of his heart inside her where they were joined.

“What is it?” A keening sound broke from her as his hard length rasped along exposed nerves, the friction making her shift and tighten around him, pulled a moan from her throat. “What’s making me so wet?” She could feel it leaking from inside her, wetting her pussy.

“My people call it *loralegen*. Love juice.”

“Love juice?” Eyes wide she stared up at him. “What is it?” She was still stretched, but it was suddenly good. There was pressure, a slight burning, but the pain was gone.

“A substance secreted by an Allourian male’s cock which enhances the sexual pleasure of our mates.” His voice was raspy, his face dark, eyes heavy-lidded as he pumped into her with short sharp motions. He couldn’t go faster, harder. She wasn’t ready for that yet.

She couldn’t catch her breath and arched up. “It works.” Her breasts felt as if they were swelling. Her nipples kept getting tighter. She looked down and gasped. Her nipples were longer, plumper, and redder than they had ever been.

His finger stroked, making her hips rock to his rhythm. She slid a fraction of an inch on his length. She wanted him to touch her harder.

“What do I feel like inside you?”

She couldn’t keep her eyes open. “How do I answer that? How do I describe the fullness, the weight and pressure of your cock filling me?” Heat flushed her breasts, neck and cheeks.

He caught her chin and lifted her face to his. His mouth claimed hers as he caressed her pussy.

Her hips chased his stroking finger, arching, desperate for a harder touch. She slid up and down on his cock. The sensation kept growing, the fire building.

“You’re huge.” She arched against him, pulled back, arched again. “Like stone.”

His finger pressed and rubbed. He could barely think. All he could do was feel, her surrounding him, squeezing him, riding him.

“I’m tight, stretched. I can feel you pulsing inside me. Alive.” She rocked against him, in rhythm with him.

He rubbed the swollen nub of nerves. “You’re ready for me now aren’t you?”

She jerked and cried out. Her hips lifted, searching for his retreating finger, impaling herself on him. “Touch me,” she demanded in answer to his question. She never wanted what he was doing to stop.

He caught her swollen flesh between thumb and forefinger and gently squeezed.

She exploded. Bucked against him. Forced him deeper.

He lost control. His penis grew inside her. Wider, longer, tighter. He couldn’t stop. He pulled back, slammed into her. Fast, hard, deep. For her he wanted to be gentle, but he couldn’t.

She gasped for breath as he forged into her, filling her with his huge cock. Her hips lifted, searching for him as he pulled out of her, leaving her empty and desperate. “You’re a monster. I can’t breathe when you’re inside me. You’re so big. Huge... Come into me again.” Her words emerged breathless and airy.

“I can’t hold back. I have to be inside you.” Neck arched, muscles straining, he pistoned against her, into her. She was everything he could want. Black velvet heat. Wet. His.

She stared up at him, enthralled. Nipples, breasts, vagina, she throbbed. How could he move? Yet he drove into her, wedged himself inside her. She groaned as he did it.

There wasn’t room. Yet he pulled back and thrust into her again and again. Hot, tight, the friction a burn that kept building.

“I won’t survive,” she whispered.

“I can’t stop.” Teeth gritted, he repeated the motion. Braced on his arms, neck corded, his pelvis lunged against hers. His cock fit tight, forced back and forth inside her by the movement of his hips. Flesh slapped against flesh. His penis filled her, retreated, filled her.

Faster and faster. So good, the friction unbearable. She tried to move, couldn’t. He overwhelmed her, pounded in and out of her. She held his shoulders as he hammered into her.

The bed made a whooshing sound as his thrusts pushed her into it. His pulsing length and breadth filled her again and again. Low moans broke from her with each thrust.

He forced his arm between them, pressed his thumb to her clit and rubbed.

“No!” she screamed and came off the bed. Sensation arced from her clit to her womb. She tightened around him. Waves of sensation rolled through her. What was happening? She wouldn’t survive. No one could survive this.

Impossibly he grew inside her, swelled and lengthened even more.

“I’m won’t live through this.” She screamed again as the waves mounted higher.

His penis delved into her, hard, fast, deep. Every muscle in her body clenched and pulsed. She exploded, released a pulsating throb that went on and on, draining her of strength and will.

Mindlessly Raeder plunged into her wet, scorching depths. Her cunt spasmed around him, squeezed him from tip to root. Pressure to the point of pain. He thrust deep, his back arched. He jerked against her, helpless as her inner muscles milked the seed from him, squeezed him tighter until there was nothing left to give.

He collapsed on top of her, still inside her. Hard, deep, tight. The mating ritual had begun. He didn’t want it to ever end, would be content to stay inside her forever. Her fear had been real. She hadn’t known what to expect, but she had taken him and would again. She was a miracle made for him.

She was limp and unmoving. He rolled to his back taking her with him.

“You’re still in me. Still huge. Didn’t I please you?” She’d heard, read and seen on holo-vision that men lost their rigidity after they came. Raeder was still thick and long inside her. Why?

He stroked her damp hair away from her face, enjoyed the feel of her head resting on his chest. “You pleased me very much. Rest now. We’ve only just started.”

That should intimidate her, but she was too tired. She sighed, snuggled her head into him and squeezed his hips with her thighs. The motion moved her along his length. She shivered, the friction sending sensation arcing through her. A smile tilted her lips as reality faded into sleep.

Chapter 3

Raeder woke, his breath catching as Alea shifted over him.

Tensing lax muscles, he turned to his side still locked deep inside her. He felt a savage, primitive satisfaction. She was his, filled with him. Her face was flushed, her lips full and red. Her lashes lay like dark fans on her cheeks. Her neck was long and slender, her chest and breasts pale. Her nipples were swollen and red from his mouth on them.

Leaning forward, he licked her left nipple. Her cunt tightened around his cock and her eyes flew open.

“It’s too soon,” she protested. “I can’t take you again.” What he had done to her had been beyond imagination. Pleasure she would never have believe existed.

“You don’t have to.” He smiled and rocked his hips against her. “I’m already inside you.”

Dropping his head to her breast, he stiffened his tongue and batted at the tender tip.

She flinched. Her inner muscles quivered as his penis stirred, growing ever harder inside her.

“You’re going to kill me.” Her back arched lifting her breast to his mouth. If she had a choice of how she was going to go, being killed with pleasure wasn’t bad.

He closed his lips over the bud and drew hard. A low murmur of approval broke from him as she arched into his mouth.

Her hips bucked against him. Her inner muscles squeezed him. Her desire bathed him in wet heat. She wanted him again, hadn’t stopped wanting him.

He released her nipple with a moist, sucking sound and turned to nuzzle the other one. He rubbed the tip with his nose. He licked her, wetting the taut nub. He blew on it and she shivered and he smiled. He loved the way she reacted to him.

“I won’t kill you,” he promised, “and you’ll love it. Again.”

She arched upward wanting more. She loved the feel of his mouth on her breast, sucking her nipples. Wet heat surrounding her, drawing on her.

“Tell me what you want.” The dark velvet rasp of his voice caressed her.

She shivered. “You. I want you.” And she did want him. Going back to her life, alone and unloved was suddenly terrifying. But she wasn’t going to think about it. Not now with him stretching her, the blunt head of his cock lodged against her womb.

Her nipple tightened into a hard point as he licked it. She ached for his mouth. All thought flew from her mind.

“Tell me what you want.” He pushed up, one arm around her pulling her with him until they were both sitting.

The new position almost pulled his cock out of her. She felt empty, bereft. She moaned in protest.

He folded her legs on either side of his hips and pulled back until only the knob of his cock penetrated her. Teeth clenched, he fought the urge to slam into her. There was nowhere he wanted to be except buried in her honeyed depths.

Her entrance was stretched tight but her channel was achingly empty. And he wouldn’t do anything until she said what she wanted.

“I want you to suckle my breast.” Embarrassed, she ducked her head. She couldn’t believe she was saying these things to him. What she dreamed was so different than the woman she was, and this was a dream.

His head lowered to her breasts. His lips closed over her left nipple. He kept the pressure light. If she wanted more she was going to have to tell him.

“Harder,” she whispered. She wanted him to draw hard, to pull her nipple taut, to feel his teeth on her

once more.

He increased the pressure, but not enough to appease her.

Frustrated she caught his head in her hands and arched, thrusting her breast deep into his mouth. "Suck me hard," she demanded. "Deep in your mouth. Hard and tight, like when you're in me."

His hips jerked against her. His penis pressed into her another inch. His growl vibrated against her breast. He drew hard, pulling her nipple tight in his mouth.

She moaned, her hips twisted, moving her on his huge shaft. Yes, this was what she wanted, what she needed.

"The other one," she urged. "Suck the other one." She would never get enough of him. He raked her nipple lightly with his teeth, making her shudder. He moved to the other nipple and treated it to the same glorious torment, rasping her tender flesh with his agile tongue, drawing on it powerfully. When he pulled back, his lips were red and swollen.

"Do it to me."

Startled, her eyes flew to his. "You like to be suckled?" The idea intrigued her. Her eyes moved to his chest. Brown and almost flat, his nipples were tight points stabbing through the black hair that covered his chest.

"Yes."

"Bite?" She looked up through her lashes, watched his face darken and his eyelids lower.

"Yes. I like my sex rough and powerful. Primitive." The thought of her lips on him, her mouth nursing on his flesh, her teeth biting made his cock throb and grow inside her.

Tentatively she reached out. She touched her fingertip to his nipple and rotated the tight nub of flesh. It felt as hard and pointed against her finger as it looked.

He caught her head in his hands and pulled her face to his chest. His hips rocked against hers pushing his cock another inch into her tight sheath. "Use your mouth," he ordered.

Need knotted her stomach. She opened her mouth and licked him. His nipple was tiny yet erotically pointed and hard against her tongue.

"Harder," he growled.

She pressed her lips to his chest and sipped at his nipple. She tested the nub with her tongue. She closed her mouth over him and suckled.

His hands tightened on her head. He moved her head across his chest.

"Bite me," he ordered. He would teach her what pleased him.

She bit into his flesh with light pressure.

“Yes,” he groaned, his body thrusting against hers forcing him another inch into her.

She nuzzled across his chest. Her mouth closed over his nipple. Sucking on him, his hard nipple against her tongue was something she had never thought about doing to a man.

She rooted and sucked, tried to pull him deeper into her mouth. Bit into his flesh, testing him with her teeth. She’d never realized suckling and biting were such carnal experiences. Her vagina tightened around him and her hips surged up and down, riding the few inches of him that penetrated her with vigorous aggression.

His fingers bit into her hips. He thrust into her with a grunt. She was learning fast.

Frenzied, she rooted across his chest. She licked and bit. Tasted and tested him.

He drove into her, his buttocks clenching. His fingers bit into her hips, held her as he pumped in and out of her. She was hot and wet, the perfect ride.

Her teeth closed on his chest around his nipple and bit down.

He surged forward, lifting her with the power of his hips.

Her breath catching, she released him and licked around his nipple.

He lifted her, swung her around and came down on top of her. He filled her with one powerful thrust, forged into her tight, swollen sheath and went wild. He pounded into her, each stroke faster, deeper, harder. He wanted to be closer to her, deeper inside her.

She couldn’t move, overwhelmed by the force of each invasion, a prisoner to his passion.

For the second time she could only hold on as the storm broke over her, pulled the heavy melting response from her very being. Her inner muscles gripped and released as sensation overwhelmed her. Her moan became a scream as her nipples elongated and her cunt spasmed, her body convulsing in a powerful orgasm.

Milked by her as orgasm raked her, he couldn’t hold back, came inside her, his cum hot and thick. He collapsed on top of her still deep inside. He’d never been so drained.

Sprawled under him, her legs limp, she started to drift away.

He wasn’t comfortable. He turned them until they were on their sides, her breasts pressed to his chest, his pelvis tight against hers. He rubbed his chin against the top of her head, wrapped an arm around her and cupped her breast in his hand.

His cum, her own secretions and his *loralegoen* seeped out of her, the scent a mixture of musk and saline. Their combined scents were a perfume he could build an empire with if he could reproduce it. An aromatic aphrodisiac.

She breathed deep savoring the aroma of sex. Hope unfurled as sleep descended, warm and beckoning. But she couldn’t let herself feel it. He wasn’t real. She’d wanted sex with a man totally focused on her and she’d gotten it. As real as it seemed it was still a fantasy.

She burrowed her head under his chin and pushed the thoughts away. She wouldn't think about it any more. Her dreams had already come true.

But in the early hours of the morning, as a simulated dawn lit the room, sleep pushed away the boundaries of common sense.

* * * * *

Warm lips sipped at her neck. Hard fingers tugged and rolled her nipples. She moaned and stretched, wincing as her inner muscles tightened around Raeder's rigid length still buried inside her.

"How can you still be hard?" she asked, yawning as she stretched, savoring the feel of him inside her. Soon she wouldn't know what it felt like not to be stretched and full of him, she was getting so used to him being inside her.

He pulled out, wincing as her muscles nipped at him. A hard smile lifted his lips. Her body didn't want to let him go.

"No!" She grasped his arms, but he pulled away, lifted and turned her until her back was to his chest. His penis was a hard ridge of flesh against her bottom.

He pressed his knee against her upper leg. When she lifted her thigh, he insinuated his hair-roughened one between hers. He stroked one hand down her abdomen, and hip to thigh. His other hand fondled her breast, playing with her sensitive nipple. He would never tire of touching her.

"Mmmm. I like this." She moaned and undulated against him. Her nipple was so tender. She felt empty, her vagina clenching and releasing. She needed his cock inside her.

At his urging she slid her leg backward over his. His hand trailed up her inner thigh.

She shivered and moaned, undulating against him.

His cock slid between her pussy lips, rigid and ready. His teeth sank into her neck as he pinched her nipple.

She jerked and cried out. What was he going to do to her now?

His fingers combed through her curls and found her clit.

She writhed against him, growing wet under his stroking, probing fingers.

"I want you inside me," she begged. "Deep and hard and fast." She didn't care that she was pleading. She wanted him and she wanted him now.

He rolled her to her stomach. He lifted her hips, positioned himself at her entrance. He didn't wait or tease, he lunged forward, penetrated fast and deep. His hands cupped her breasts as he pounded into her, making the huge bed rock.

She came, her orgasm rocketing through her.

His movements grew more powerful as she clamped down on him tighter and tighter. He had wanted to

go slow, to torment them both but what was between them was too incendiary.

She couldn't breathe. Her body jerked with each powerful thrust. Her breasts bounced. Her nipples ached. He filled her, deep and tight.

She surged up against him, savoring the feel of him stretching her swollen sheath, friction making her hypersensitive flesh burn. Each thrust made her breath catch.

His penis rasped against her inner tissue as he pistoned into her. The motion forced him deep into her clinging heat.

He grunted. His breath hissed against her neck as he ejaculated inside her. She felt his juices seep out of her, wetting her pussy and upper thighs. The room—she—smelled of sex. His and hers. Theirs.

She collapsed on the bed under him. He was still hard, lodged deep inside her. His pulse throbbed inside her, made her sheath clench.

She loved it all. The hot, musky scent, the slap of skin on skin, the sweat and the slurping sound as he pulled his rigid length out of her only to thrust back inside.

She'd read holo-books where men used the bonds of sex to tie women to them. She wanted to do that to him, to bind him to her. She wanted him to be real. Wanted him to want her. She wanted sex, but she wanted more than that, too. She wanted him to be a part of her life. She needed magic. Was there a way to make fantasy reality?

Raeder settled her against him, cupped her breast and let sleep pull him under. He'd found his mate. After three days of constant joining, bonds that could never be broken would tie her to him. He would have a measure of security for his people and he would have her.

Chapter 4

Aleea smiled before she ever opened her eyes. She stretched, and her right nipple rubbed against the hard hand holding her breast. Heat spiked from the sensitive nub to her womb. A shiver coursed down her spine. She tightened around the cock lodged inside her. She was stretched and full. She couldn't help but wiggle against him. She would love to wake up each morning with him inside her.

She reached up, touched her left nipple and shivered. It was just as sensitive as the right; sore in a delicious way from the attention Raeder had given it.

Raeder.

She opened her eyes and stared at the Amerian tapestry on the gray-green veined wall. It was brilliant. The colors jewel toned and vibrant. It depicted a sapphire blue lake with towering silver trees in the background. Stars, she wished it were all real.

She rocked her hips against Raeder, riding up and down his penis in a gentle glide. Her eyes closed and a hum sounded in her throat. She wouldn't mind living this fantasy for the rest of her life.

"Except for the sensation being a bit...muted it is so real." Gabriela's words echoed in her mind.

She purposely tightened her muscles around him, groaned low in her throat when her inner muscles protested. She was sore. There hadn't been anything muted about her experience with Raeder. If anything it had been too powerful, too overwhelming.

She rocked her hips. He stirred behind her, grew even longer and thicker inside her. She wanted his fingers on her clit pushing her over the edge but she wanted to savor the moment too. She tried to push the disturbing thoughts away.

But her thoughts wouldn't settle. *Was it real?* She didn't want to think about it, but it wasn't going to leave her alone. Gabriela had said her fantasy would be muted.

She clenched around his hard length as she rode him.

"Except for the sensation being a bit...muted it is so real, so real, so real...real."

Her eyes flew open. She froze, fully impaled on his cock. Her breath caught in her throat. Oh, Stars. This wasn't a fantasy, it was *real*.

She had a reality, a life that had nothing to do with her fantasy. She had a life and it was time to go back to it. Her real world. She wasn't some femme fatale to use sex to bind Raeder to her.

And what would she do if he did want her in his life and not just in his bed? She worked at the Port Authority on Centera for Stars sake. He was...Stars! He was a prince. She stared around the opulent, dimly lit chamber. Why was she here? What was going on? He could have sex with any woman he wanted. Why had he chosen her? What did it have to do with Illusions?

Did it matter? She had to get home.

She rode his shaft in a gentle, sliding motion, not picking up the pace. She didn't want to wake him, but she couldn't leave yet. She needed him, needed the power of sex with him, one last time.

Closing her eyes, she savored the friction of his cock sliding in and out of her. It was a heavy, dragging sensation.

A whimper escaped her as the pressures low in her pelvis grew. She needed to come.

Eyes closed, she slid her hand between her legs and touched her clit. She yelped and jumped, so tender she could hardly stand her own touch. She was so needy she was doing things she had never dreamed she would do.

Teeth gritted, she pressed and rubbed the small nub of flesh. She bit her lip, a scream strangled in her throat as an orgasm slammed through her. Hot cum jetted from him into her already wet sheath, adding to the sensation.

It took forever for the swells to subside. Finally she lay panting and boneless his hard shaft still deep inside her.

When she could move, she lifted his hand from her breast. The air felt cold against skin warmed by him all night. She eased forward, sliding along the length of his penis until only the tip stretched her opening. She moved off him, wincing and shivering as he popped free of her grasping muscles.

She couldn't resist looking back. He was so beautiful. Not in a classic way. He was big, six and a half feet tall, at least. His chest was wide, his shoulders broad and powerful. He was perfect and he made her feel perfect, small and delicate.

Her fingers itched to trace the width of his shoulders, to test his biceps and find out again if they were as hard as they looked. She had thought to find a man like him in a fantasy, never in reality.

She looked at his chest, the temptation of his flat, brown nipples. She pressed a hand low over her abdomen where heat gathered and inner muscles clenched.

Her gaze trailed farther down. He was still aroused. His member thick and long. How did he do it? Stay stiff and ready to forge into her?

Her mouth watered, her nipples tightened and moisture pooled inside her. Closing her eyes, she turned away. He was way too tempting. She had to go home before she couldn't find the strength to leave.

She got off the bed, grabbed her dress and slippers from the floor. Heart pounding, she searched the big room. There was the pool, but she didn't want to wake him by splashing in it. There had to be a full sonishower somewhere. She'd have to try one of the doors. They certainly weren't going to jump forward and tell her which one was the privacy chamber.

She took a step, winced and stopped. Every muscle from her neck to her knees was sore.

Grimacing, she shuffled across the room. The first door slid open and she found herself looking into a closet as big as her singlet. It was full of his clothes. Official and casual garments hanging side by side. She stepped back and the door slid shut.

She glanced at Raeder. He hadn't moved. If he would just sleep until she could get home, she'd be happy.

Hurrying to the second door she walked through when it opened and smiled. Thank the Galaxies. Everything she needed. Sonishower, necessity chamber and reflection glass.

She stared at the woman reflected back at her. Hair wild around her flushed face, lips and nipples swollen and red. Her thighs glistened with his cum as it leaked from her, still warm from her body.

She looked away, her insides quivering. She had to get home, but how? The thought made her pause. She didn't know where the translocator was and didn't have access codes if she found it. The only thing she had to wear was the dress and slippers she'd worn to the ball. If she were lucky, the authorities would only pick her up for indecent exposure.

The door slid shut behind her and she leaned back against it. Someone would help her. They had to.

Resolutely she straightened away from the door, walked across the room and stepped into the sonishower.

* * * * *

Raeder watched the door slide shut behind Alea. Anger licked through his veins that she would try and get away from him. Well, she wouldn't get very far. There was no way he was going to lose her now.

Whatever had scared her he would deal with.

He rolled off the bed and went to the third door. It slid open and he walked inside. He strode across the exercise room to the second privacy chamber.

Moments later he strode back across the bedroom to the room Alea had disappeared into. Even if she didn't realize it yet, she belonged with him. Allourian males, especially princes, did *not* lose what was theirs.

The door slid open soundlessly and he walked inside. In the sonishower, she stood naked, her head tilted back, her breasts lifted, full and inviting, the tips plump and red. The ends of her hair brushed across her firm buttocks. His mouth watered just looking at her. Watching her naked could become one of his favorite pastimes, but not as much as having sex with her.

His cock jerked against his abdomen. He wanted to be buried inside her. He hadn't stopped wanting her since he'd first seen her. Everything about her made him hard. Her slender body, small big-nippled breasts, her spicy-sweet scent. When he was inside her, her cunt squeezing his cock tighter and tighter in her creamy heat, he couldn't hold back. It felt like she pulled the cum from his very core.

More blood rushed to his cock. The head glistened wetly. He needed to be inside her before he came from watching her.

He stepped into the sonishower behind her, caught her hips and pulled her back against him, rubbing his shaft against her ass. A low growl rumbled in his chest.

She gasped and straightened. Raeder was supposed to be sleeping, not behind her, naked and aroused.

He turned them until they faced the reflection glass. Her eyes were wide, her lashes thick with a hint of curl. As he watched her nipples tightened and their color darkened. He had no doubt, her body wanted his.

"You weren't going to leave without saying goodbye." His face was impassive, but his eyes almost glowed with his anger.

She shivered, opened her mouth, closed it again. She wasn't going to lie to him.

He held her against him, fingers curled over her hipbones in front, his thumbs stroking the upper swell of her buttocks in back.

She tried to step away but he wouldn't let her go.

"I have to leave." She reached back, caught his wrists and tried to push him away. Her breasts lifted with the movement, high and firm, her nipples proud red points at their crests.

He growled low in his throat and rocked his hips against her. He wasn't going to let her go anywhere. She was his.

She sucked in a deep breath. Against her ass he was hard and throbbing. Her insides clenched at the thought of him forging into her tender sheath. But she couldn't let it happen.

"This was supposed to be a fantasy. A cyber-fantasy. It wasn't supposed to be real. But you are real,

aren't you?" Her question emerged as an accusation.

"Very real." There was no apology in his voice. He stepped closer, pressed his chest and abdomen to her back and buttocks. He stroked his hands up her hips, around to her stomach and up until he cupped her breasts, her hands still encircling his wrists. His hands were dark against her pale skin.

Her nipples hardened, stood out from their darker aureoles, red and begging. Her traitorous body wanted him, silently begged him to take her.

"I have to go home." She moaned as his thumbs flicked her nipples.

When he rolled the firm tips, her lips parted. Her head fell back against his shoulder and her eyes closed.

"Look at us." He breathed the words in her ear. He caught her lobe between his teeth and tugged and nipped it. Anger and desire, an intoxicating mix, filled him. She said she had to go home. Her home was with him and he would make her see that. "Look at us."

Her lashes lifted and he rewarded her with soft licks along her neck. "Look at my hands on you."

She couldn't help but look, was mesmerized by the sight and the feel. Against her breasts his thumbs looked huge and dark. They covered her nipples, hiding then revealing them as he rubbed the ruby points. It was a tantalizing peep show.

She bit her bottom lip to hold back a moan at the rasping strokes. Every caress reached to her womb, made her wetter, readying her for him. She held his wrists tight as her knees threatened to buckle.

"Are they sore?" They had made love. His body had been in hers, pleased hers. He wanted her thinking about that, not about leaving him.

"Y-yes."

"Sensitive?" He scraped his thumbnails over the tips.

"Yes. Oh, Stars, yes." She ground her ass hard against his steely length. Her head thrashed from side to side on his chest. The sensation was so intense it rocked her where she stood.

He caught her nipples between thumb and forefingers, holding them. He wanted to pinch them, to watch her writhe against him.

"Look at them."

She did as he ordered. Couldn't help herself. It was all so sensual, the sight more than erotic.

"I like the look." His voice was low, his breath hot on her neck. "Don't you? Your red, swollen nipples in my dark fingers."

Her breasts rose and fell with each fast, shallow breath. The motion tugged her nipples in his light grip. She couldn't tear her eyes from her breasts, the pink tips trapped by his dark fingers.

He squeezed the aching tips at the same time his teeth bit at the base of her neck. He wanted to brand her as his own.

She cried out. Her hips bucked as her knees buckled.

He lowered them both to the floor, the Amerian rug soft against her back. He rolled her over, one hand caressed down her body. His fingers combed through the hair covering her mound and he forced one knee between her legs from behind. He found her clit and rubbed. She wanted him, but he needed her to want him more.

Her muscles quivered, more moisture leaked from her to wet his fingers.

He stroked her pussy. Circled her opening. Two fingers pushed into her. Blast, she was fire in his hands.

She pulsed around him, bursts of sensation sparking along her nerves. She groaned and her back arched as she moved her hips, riding his invading fingers. Deep inside the clenching, growing pressure of another climax built.

“Not yet,” he growled. “Not until I’m in you. Lean over.” It was his cock, buried deep in her heat that would make her come, not his fingers.

She did as he said, desperate to have him inside her. On her hands and knees, she waited for him. Her sheath contracted again and again, empty and aching for him. She felt decadent, her sex open and available to him.

“Arch your back.” He forced her legs wider. The blunt head of his cock pressed against her opening, driving forward with unyielding pressure. With a popping sensation, he was inside. Home.

She stretched to fit him, cried out as he sank deeper, groaned as he plunged in, deeper and deeper until he touched her womb. The pressure, almost painful, quickly turned to building pleasure.

His hands gripped her hips, his fingers bit into her, holding her steady as he pulled back only to stab forward, knifing into her.

The friction as his shaft pumped in and out of her sheath was almost unbearable. She bit her lip, tried to lift into his thrusts. He was hard and hot. Deep.

Her inner muscles clenched trying to keep him inside.

He slid almost free of her clinging heat, pounded back in.

She cried out as he pushed her higher, sobbed as she melted around him, tremor after tremor shaking her, draining her. She would never get enough of him.

She screamed as every muscle in her body convulsed, her orgasm racking her body.

And he didn’t let her come down. He continued to piston in and out of her, low grunts accompanying each thrust. He would never let her go.

He held her captive as he hammered into her. It felt like she was trying to clamp his cock inside her, she was so tight. He arched against her, expanded inside her. His pelvis rocked against her ass as he ejaculated in her. He spurted again and again, filling her with his hot fluid. Her body was a vise around him, squeezing every drop of cum from him.

For a long moment he knelt behind her, bowed over her. Finally he rocked back on his haunches and lifted her back against him. He pulled free of her clinging sheath before rising to his feet. He lifted her into his arms and carried her into the bedroom. As he laid her on the bed he breathed deep. How did he make her see that they were made for each other? Sex with her was the best he'd ever had. She was his other half and she didn't understand that.

He lowered himself on top of her and forced her legs wider. He held his cock with one hand, teased her entrance with the blunt head. With one smooth thrust, he buried himself in her. Sex was a powerful tool and he would use it to bind her to him.

She moaned, stared up at him and shook her head. Unbelievably he was still hard. But her inner tissues were swollen and tender from so much use.

"I can't," she whispered.

He brushed his lips over hers, the caress gentle and loving. "Just close your eyes and sleep."

"How can I sleep with you inside me?"

"You've done it before," he pointed out. He smiled and brushed her hair from her blushing face. "I can't sleep unless I'm inside you. And when we're like this you can't run away from me without waking me." His words were a warning. He shifted so all his weight wasn't on her yet she was still pinned under him, impaled by his hard length. "Go to sleep, baby."

Chapter 5

Three hours later, sitting on the bed, Raeder couldn't take his eyes off her. Aleea. Her nipples were soft, their color a dark rose he couldn't resist. Reaching out he stroked one with the tip of his finger. It firmed and hardened at his touch.

Aleea hummed in her sleep and rubbed her legs together in a languid motion.

Blast. He wanted her again. His cock hadn't softened yet and just looking at her made him harder. When she responded immediately, he was ready to ejaculate right then. He'd known the mating ritual, when initiated, was intense but he hadn't realized it would leave him unable to think of anything but her.

He touched her other nipple and gritted his teeth when she moaned and rubbed her legs together again. He wanted her again, right now. She'd tried to run away while he slept and he didn't want her doing that again. He didn't want to chase her, but he would if she left him. She was too important to the safety of his people and she was becoming increasingly important to him.

If he had to stay inside her for the next year, ride her until she was exhausted, he would. She wouldn't get away from him.

A smile lighted his dark face. He liked the idea of her being too exhausted to leave his bed. There were a lot of ways he wanted to touch her and taste her. Spending the rest of the day learning what made her groan and sigh, what made her writhe and scream, sounded good. But there were other things he had to do.

Trailing his hand down the center of her body, he stopped low on her pelvis, just above the golden-brown curls covering her mound and pressed down, massaging her silky skin.

“Wake up, Aleea.”

She tried to roll away.

He held her in place. “Open your eyes.” He combed his fingers through her curls and her eyes flew open.

“Again?”

Her wide-eyed wonder and disbelieving tone made him smile.

“Not yet,” he assured her, cupping her mound but making no other sexual advance. He wanted her aware of him, aware of her own need. His hand at her sex was something she couldn’t ignore. He burrowed one finger between her nether lips and rested the tip against her clit.

She froze under him, tried not to breathe.

Wicked satisfaction darkened his face. “I need to eat something.” Slowly, he looked up from the juncture of her thighs to meet her gaze. His eyes were heavy-lidded and dark with lust. “I need to eat something other than you.” He laughed when she blushed. “You’ve got to be hungry, too.”

Her lips thinned and her small pointy chin rose. He might make her thighs quiver but he didn’t need to know it. “I need to go home.”

“No.” He stroked the swollen knot between her legs.

She drew in a sharp breath. There was no way she couldn’t respond.

He watched her hips rock and her eyelids droop. Her nipples jutted tall and proud. Her lips turned pouty, her eyes dreamy.

He saw the moment thought returned. Her lips thinned, she stiffened, clamped her legs together and glared up at him.

“I’ll eat when I get home.”

“Afraid you won’t be able to resist me long enough to eat?” He raised one brow, taunting her.

She opened her mouth, closed it without saying anything. A bewildered frown flitted across her face.

He had to fight not to smile. “Use the sonishower. I’ll call for something to eat.” He flexed his fingers against her one last time. Her thighs tightened around him as he pulled his hand from between her clenched thighs. Her hips lifted, following him. He smiled with dark satisfaction.

“There’s a robe by the privacy chamber for you. Ask and the Strider’s com-controller will direct you to the Morning room. A meal will be waiting for you.”

He laughed at her outraged expression as he left the room. Something hit the door with a soft thud.

Aleea sat up, pulled her knees to her chest and buried her face against them. Stars, what had she done? Sex with Raeder had been better than good. Any other man would pale in comparison. He'd pulled responses from her she'd never realized were in her to give. She'd screamed and not just once.

She unfolded herself, wincing as muscles inside and out protested. This was definitely real. Her nipples throbbed, ached at the brush of air over them.

Sliding off the bed she padded across the room, walking gingerly, her feet sinking into the plush jade rug that reminded her of holo-images she had seen of Allourian braeshaer fields. A sonishower had never looked so good.

Hot pink color stained the face staring back at her from the reflection glass. Memories of Raeder flashed through her mind with startling clarity. His hands dark against her breasts. His thumbs hard against her nipples.

Closing her eyes she tried to push the memories away. What she had to do now was get cleaned up, dressed, say goodbye and go home. Raeder had been furious when she'd tried to run away earlier and she couldn't blame him. If she'd been the one to wake up with him gone from her bed, she would have been hurt and furious, too. But this was reality and what she'd wanted was a fantasy. Someone should have told her the truth.

She wouldn't run away, but she *would* say goodbye and walk away.

She opened her eyes and froze. She would walk away but she would never forget because the woman staring out of the reflection glass was herself and yet not. She was the same but different. It was nothing that anyone would be able to see on the outside, but inside she was more confident. She could satisfy a man and be satisfied by him. But the only man she could ever imagine wanting was one she could never have a future with.

Slowly she turned to face the reflection glass that made up the inside of the privacy chamber door. Her eyes looked too big for her face. Her hair was wild, the curls tangled.

With fingers shaking, she touched her lips. They looked bruised and swollen, almost pouty. Her nipples reminded her of her lips, full and darker pink than they'd ever been before. She refused to look lower but didn't have to. The flesh between her thighs felt swollen and tender, too.

This was beyond anything she'd ever imagined. Yes, she'd thought about sex but had never imagined it with someone like Raeder. He was big, handsome, and virile. She'd expected kisses and petting and intercourse. She could never have imagined the power of his thrusts, the full, impossibly stretched feeling of him inside her. Or his fascination with her breasts. He overwhelmed her.

She thought longingly of the pool, the huge sunken green marble pool, the center of the black and jade room. If she got in that, she'd never get out and she had to go home. Life was a one-room singlet and working at the Port Authority. It wasn't a Star-Strider with pools she could swim in.

She stepped into the sonishower and turned, brushed her hair back so every inch was cleaned. She groaned and slumped where she stood. Her muscles melted and her bones went weak. What she wanted to do was lie down and let the sonishower massage her. She was one big ache.

Finally she managed to move again. She winced when the massaging sensation passed over her nipples and between her legs. She found tender spots at her neck and hips and buttocks. Raeder was a very physical lover.

She touched her nipples and started at the brush of her fingers on the overly sensitive nubs.

Wanting to stay where she was, but knowing she couldn't, she stepped out. The silence after the low hum of the shower was almost deafening. Pushing her hair away from her face, she looked up and froze.

Raeder stood a foot away, his face dark, his eyes heavy-lidded.

"I thought you were gone." She tingled under the hot sweep of his eyes. Had he seen her touch herself?

He hadn't been able to leave without seeing her again. His gaze settled on her breasts. "Are they as tender as they appeared to be when you touched them? You flinched."

Oh, Stars, he had watched her shower, seen her jump when she touched herself. Hot tingles arced from her nipples to her womb. She'd never thought being watched would turn her on, but it did.

"Yes. They're tender." Saying it made her shiver.

"Between your thighs?" His eyes dropped to the curls covering her mound. He wanted to watch her touch herself again.

"Yes." His question, the power of his eyes on her, stole her voice. She grew wet, her vagina clenched. How did he make her feel so much with just a look? Her coworkers would never believe she could be like this. Naked breasts jutted at the man who had taken her over and over again.

"What would happen if I sucked your nipples?" His gaze rose to her breasts.

Her insides quivered. "I'd come."

Raeder stepped forward. He couldn't take his eyes off her. She was flushed pink. Her nipples were red and puckered. Her hand had jerked away when she'd run it over her nipple and he had almost come. He'd wanted to get in with her when she'd flinched. He'd wanted to be the one touching her nipples, stroking between her legs. The thought of making her come just by sucking her nipples made him hurt.

"No." She raised her hands and stepped back. Her chin went up and her lips thinned. "I have to go home."

"You'll eat. We'll talk. Then we'll go home. And on the way we'll find out if I can make you come with just my mouth on your nipples."

Aleea opened her mouth, but he was gone before she could say anything.

When he said they would go home he wasn't talking about Centera, she was sure.

She tried to ignore his words about sucking her nipples as she slipped into the crimson robe he'd set out for her. She didn't want to think about going home and being alone in her singlet. But alone and home was where she needed to be. This reality wasn't hers. It wasn't where she belonged. He was a prince, for Stars sake.

When she got home she was going to drop in and have a little talk with Gabria at Illusions. She'd taken the logo a bit too seriously. Fantasy better than reality. Their idea of fantasy was reality.

Nipples hard and burning as the Silar-Silk robe rubbed over them, she shuffled through the bedroom and into the hall as fast as her aching muscles would allow. She would eat because she was starving, but after that she was going home.

* * * * *

Several minutes later, Aleea was ready to thump on more than a wall.

"Blast it, how many doors does one sleeping chamber need?" Her jaw tight, she yanked her robe straight as she stomped out of Raeder's chamber and into the corridor. Four doors she'd had to try and those weren't counting the closet and privacy chamber doors she'd tried before.

An amorphous, globular gray being oozed around a bend in the corridor. She held back a shudder, moved across the hall, smiled and kept walking. *How did you greet something without a face?*

"Nice garment. It shows your nipples to advantage."

The words were spoken in her mind. She gasped, jumped, looked at the blob then down. Her nipples were hard points against the thin material of the robe. Heat rushed into her cheeks. A snicker sounded in her mind as the blob disappeared through a door further down the corridor.

She glared after the disgusting little being. "Pervert."

She pulled the robe away from her breasts. When she let the material drop, it fell back into place clearly outlining her nipples. She lifted her chin and marched down the hall. It was definitely time to go home.

Her steps slowed until she was standing still. She looked back the way she had come, looked forward again. Wonderful, now she was lost. She didn't know where the dining deck was and she wouldn't be able to find Raeder's chambers either. Coming or going, the corridor looked the same, dark silvery-brown doors recessed in a lighter brown wall.

"Where in Solar's Hell is the dining deck?" she growled to herself.

"Take the third door to your left. The dining deck is the second door on the right."

She jumped. The voice came from all around her, was distinctly feminine and had a very sultry quality to it. "Who are you?" she demanded.

"I am Incom, the voice of *The Summit*."

"Men." Only a man would have a Strider with a voice like that.

Tight-lipped she marched down the hall to the third door on the left, then walked down the hall heading towards the second door on her right. The door slid open as she approached and she walked through it. The room she walked into was packed.

She froze. Every eye in the room was trained on her. Blast it, she was naked except for the robe and it

outlined every detail of her body. It probably showed more than if she were standing naked and here she was standing in front of a crowd. Wonderful.

Teeth gritted, she lifted her chin and took a step forward. Everyone could look at her if they wanted but she was going to ignore them. All she had to do was brazen it out and get home. Home was good. Nice and boring and things like being naked in front of strange people never happened there.

A tall, skinny male approached her.

What did he think he was doing? Didn't he realize she was trying to ignore people?

His head was covered with downy brown feathers, his eyes slightly bulbous. He wasn't quite as bad as the blob.

She curled her fingers into her palms to keep from reaching out. She really wanted to know if those feathers were as soft as they looked. Probably not a good idea.

"Your Highness." He bowed elegantly before straightening to face her. "If you will come with me, His Highness awaits you in the Morning room."

Highness? What did he mean by that? And his high-pitched, chirpy voice was annoying, too.

He didn't wait for her to reply but turned and led the way across the dining deck.

She focused on his narrow back. She really wanted to study the strange gathering of people in the room but how did she do that if she didn't want to see them staring at her? Blast it, she couldn't. What she should do was head right back to Raeder's quarters and not leave them until she was taken home.

Images of Raeder over her, his mouth on her, the feel of his cock in her, filled her mind. Her pussy moistened and her nipples hardened. Wonderful, just wonderful. Even thinking about the man made her hot and wet.

A door slid open in front of the bird-man. He walked through and she followed.

She breathed a sigh of relief. Except for Raeder and one other man, the room was empty. Her eyes touched on Raeder but were snagged by the man seated across from him. *Wow!* Where did they find males like this? Raeder was male perfection but this man was more. He was beautiful.

* * * * *

Nostrils flared, lips thinned, Raeder watched as Alea's eyes settled unerringly on Kael. The relief he'd felt when she entered the room changed to slow, smoldering anger. If she kept looking at Kael like she wanted to eat him, he was going to shake her.

His gaze lowered to her hard-tipped breasts. Anger edged toward fury. He would make it very clear to her when they were alone that she wasn't to look at or want anyone but him. No male was to touch her but him no matter if she was attracted to them or not.

"You didn't feel it necessary to dress?" His voice was harsh and he didn't try to soften it. He wanted her to know how angry he was.

Aleea almost jumped out of her skin. She was getting really tired of people scaring her.

She turned a glare on Raeder, swallowed hard when she saw his expression. He looked more than angry. His eyes, narrowed and cold, made her insides feel as gelatinous as the blob she'd passed in the hall. Blast it, she wasn't going to let Raeder intimidate her. He already had too much control.

She lifted her chin and smiled. "You forgot to mention that the dining deck was a public area. I'll just go back to your chamber and change into my sheath, shall I? Would that be more appropriate?"

"For *our* bedchamber." His let his gaze move to her mouth, watched as her tongue did a quick dance over her lips making them wet and shiny. Good. He wanted her nervous.

He looked at her breasts, smiled as her nipples visibly tightened. He felt his cock do the same. One corner of his mouth lifted slightly. He trailed his gaze down to her mound. He wanted the material away from her. It should be him cupping her, nothing else.

Her lips tingled. Her breasts grew heavy, the tips throbbed. Heat coursed down her middle and settled between her legs. Stars, she really should have come naked as little good as the robe was doing her. She wanted to cover her breasts and sex with her hands, but there was no way she was going to give Raeder the satisfaction of knowing he made her feel that way.

"Drilden." His voice was soft and all the more dangerous for it.

The bird-man stepped forward.

"My bride needs more suitable garments. See that they're put in our chambers."

Drilden bobbed his head in a quick bow before all but prancing out of the room.

Aleea froze. "Bride?" *What in Solar's Hell was he talking about?*

Raeder, his face expressionless, met her gaze. "That's right. My bride." He wanted no doubt in her mind as to whom she belonged.

"You know that a bride has to agree to be a bride, don't you? I haven't agreed to anything." She wasn't anyone's bride, least of all his. The sex was better than the best but the rest of this *unfantasy* hadn't been fun.

"It's not a choice either of us has." His tone was grim.

It's not a choice either of us has. The words reverberated in her mind. What did he mean by that? She wasn't his choice?

She pressed one hand to her stomach. Blast, why did his words hurt her? He didn't mean anything to her except as a sex partner.

But, blast it, if she'd met him on Centera she would have groveled to get his attention. She would have done something really spacey if he'd asked her to marry him. And chances were, he wouldn't have wanted her anyway.

Her chin rose and she glared at him. They weren't on Centera and he wasn't asking, he was ordering. Well, she was saying no.

"We always have a choice. My choice is, we don't get married and you send me home." That would make it really simple. He wouldn't be stuck having no choice and she would be back where she was comfortable. And blast it, even if she did feel a little something for the man, it didn't matter. She was going home.

"I'll go see how the jump is lining up." The man seated across from Raeder stood up. "Raeder. Highness." He bowed his head to Raeder, turned and did the same to Aleea before striding out of the room.

Raeder's eyes never left her. "Will you sit down?"

She crossed her arms over her chest and shook her head. "There's no sense getting comfortable when I'm just going to have to get up again to go home." So much for her fantasy. Everything was real and *ruined*. Sure, she had experienced sex beyond her wildest dreams. She'd fallen—

No. She had no feelings for Raeder. How could she? She didn't know him. If she'd fallen in anything, it was lust. He was just a man she'd had sex—great sex—with. He wasn't her fantasy at all, blast it and blast him. She could really have enjoyed the fantasy.

Raeder watched her closely. Her lips trembled despite being pressed together. Her eyes were suspiciously bright.

She said she didn't want to be here, that she wanted to go home. If that was true, it was only partly true. She wanted him as much as he wanted her.

She wasn't going anywhere and tears wouldn't change that. The lives of billions of people were more important than her feelings.

She was his woman, and he wasn't going to let her go.

"I'll explain this once and only once." His jaw tightened. People did what he said because he said it. He never explained himself, but he would do it this once for her because she deserved to know why her life was suddenly out of her control.

"Illusions was created by an ancestor of mine for one reason. To find genetic mates for the men of his line. You are my genetic match, the key to my genetic code. Once that was discovered, there were no choices for either of us. You are my mate."

Aleea dragged in a breath. Stars, she hadn't even been aware she wasn't breathing. The blasted man was going to kill her. "I don't want to be your mate and what's so important about a genetic match anyway? Find another match. I'm going home."

The muscles in Raeder's jaw jumped, the only sign of emotion he showed. "No, you're not. This isn't a game, it's a fact. One you have to live with. Your home is with me."

"Why?" she demanded. She needed a really large object to hit him over the head with. Maybe that

would make her feel better.

“The lives of billions of people depend on it.”

“The lives of billions of people depend on the two of us being mated? Having sex? One of us is crazy, Raeder, and it’s not me.” Stars. He looked like a fantasy but he was spacey as a Tourian trader after three days’ leave. Sex did not save lives.

One moment Raeder was sitting, the next his hands were around her upper arms, his grip just short of bruising. “Crazy or not, I need you to save my people. You’re mine, Aleea. Until my people are safe, you’re going nowhere but with me.”

Aleea pressed her lips together, tore her gaze from Raeder’s and looked down. Hot and cold chills raced up her middle. He was serious. And crazy or not, he controlled the ship.

Black spots swam before her eyes. She swayed where she stood.

He forced her to sit down.

She didn’t protest, couldn’t think.

“Take a deep breath.” It was an order but his voice wasn’t as hard as before.

She dragged in one shuddering breath, then another. Blast it, she’d been holding her breath again. She couldn’t even breathe around the man.

“You’ll get used to the idea,” he assured her.

“No, I won’t.” She closed her eyes, shook her head and laughed without humor. “None of this should be real. Not you, none of it. It’s all a fantasy and I want out of it.”

“You wanted a fantasy. You got reality and you’ve loved it. I’ve heard you scream, felt you clench around me when I’m buried inside you.

“You’ve been hot, wet and receptive every time I’ve sucked your nipples or pushed my fingers or cock into your cunt. Your nipples are hard right now and I’ve only looked at you.” He let his anger simmer. Try though she might, she couldn’t deny that she had enjoyed, even reveled in, reality with him.

“You’re right. I have been hot, wet and ready for you. I am right now.”

His eyes went to her mound.

Teeth clamped together, she resisted the urge to squirm. “That doesn’t change how I feel. I expected and wanted a fantasy. I have a life to return to. I never agreed to be anyone’s bride. And I’m going home. Now, are you taking me or do I find a way to get there myself?”

Raeder jerked her to him. She wanted him and he would prove it to her.

Her chest slammed into his.

He released her arms, grabbed her buttocks just above the thighs and lifted her against him. She might

not have agreed to be anyone's bride but she had agreed to be his mate. Every time she accepted his cock in her cunt, she agreed to it again.

"Raeder, stop."

His eyes were glacial green as he walked forward until her back was against the wall. He ground his pelvis against hers, watched with satisfaction as her eyes closed. Her body was more honest than she was. "You don't want me to stop."

She wanted to argue but couldn't. Her body was melting against him, the traitor.

He yanked her robe from between them, forced her legs up around his hips. His penis, a hard ridge under his pants, pushed against the wet, swollen folds of her sex.

How did he do it? He looked at her and she wanted him. He touched her and she was ready to come. How had he made her his so fast?

A low moan escaped her as he thrust forward. His material-covered cock rode the channel between her labia. He hit her clit with each forward motion and sparks flew. How could she tell him to leave her alone when she wanted what he was doing to her?

"You're mine." His voice was low and guttural.

How was she supposed to think with her heart thundering in her chest and him hard and thrusting between her legs?

"Raeder—"

His mouth closed over hers. His tongue invaded her mouth as his hands tightened. He thrust harder against her, his shaft working her clit without pause.

It felt like heaven and hell, pleasure and pain. She was burning, her clit an aching inferno stoked by the friction of his rigid cock.

His tongue swept in and out of her mouth. He nipped at her lower lip as he rocked against her.

She tried to move but couldn't. He controlled her. Deep inside, the pressure was hot and building. He just kept rubbing and rubbing. Her clit felt raw, her labia too. She couldn't take any more. Couldn't...

Raeder watched as he thrust into her, riding her pussy hard. Her head fell back. Eyes closed, her expression could easily be mistaken for pain. She was ready to come. He wouldn't stop until she did. She was his. His woman, his bride. His.

Everything inside Alea tightened. She shook her head back and forth. Her fingers dug into Raeder's flesh. What was he doing to her? Her clit was on fire. Her vagina clenched around nothing. And he didn't stop. Just kept thrusting his penis, the material over it torturing her tender flesh.

"Raeder." His name was a low moan. He had to stop. She was dying in his arms. The pressure. Every muscle tight. Her vagina clenching. Her clit rubbed, up and down, his cock a mortar in the pestle of her sex.

“Come for me, Aleea. Show me how much you *don’t* want me.” His voice was soft murmur yet hard and unyielding.

“I—” She tried to answer but couldn’t. He just kept pushing her higher.

Her hips bucked against him, trying to get away, to get closer.

Raeder didn’t stop the motion, kept her riding up and down, never losing contact with her clit. He could make her come, would make her come until she acknowledged her place with him. She was his and no one else’s and he would mark her as his in every way he could.

“Please.” The word was a plea. He had to release her. Had to—

She opened her mouth to scream. No sound emerged. Pleasure. Pain. Mixed waves jarred through her driven by him. Electricity arced through her, tore her apart, and melded her together.

“You’re mine, aren’t you?” His voice was soft and menacing.

“Yes.” She moaned the admission. Colors burst through her as he ground against her.

“Raeder!” His name was a low, keening wail as the biggest wave hit her and rolled her under. Her whole body convulsed. Lightning struck, bolt after bolt searing her.

She went limp in his arms.

He turned, laid her over a table and ripped her robe open from collar to hem. He dropped his mouth to her breast and devoured it, sucked the whole globe into his mouth before drawing hard on her nipple.

She cried out, writhed against him.

He did the same to the other mound as he freed his raging cock.

He pulled his mouth from her breast without releasing suction, groaned as her flesh popped free.

Aleea rose off the table. A low, keening sound broke from her throat.

He spread her legs wide, stroked her pussy and clit with one hand as he positioned the head of his cock at her entrance.

“Aleea.” He wanted her completely focused on him when he plunged into her, filling her to bursting with his great cock.

She moaned. Her desire-hazed eyes met his for a moment before her lashes fanned down on her cheeks.

He couldn’t wait for more. Like a battering ram he surged into her channel, not stopping until he was embedded in her to his balls.

He groaned. She was a wet, hot fist. Clutched him tight. Tighter than any other channel. Wetter, hotter. His.

His hips pistoned back and forth. His cock hammered in and out of her. Her channel swallowed him whole, made sucking sounds as he rammed her. The slap of skin on skin was a rhythm that drove him on.

Aleea moaned as she surfaced. She clutched at the table under her. Her fingers scratched uselessly across the seamless surface. She slid back, propelled by his pounding thrusts.

He pulled her to him, his grip bruising. He wouldn't let her get away from him in even such a small way.

"You're going to split me in two," she sobbed, his huge cock battering into her.

She screamed as the lightning struck again. Spasms racked her body as his huge pole plowed into her.

He groaned, low and long as she clenched around him. Kept riding her tight channel, forging a bond with fire. He would never get enough of her.

He pulled back, slammed home again. The ride just kept getting better, she just kept getting tighter.

She clamped down, her channel a vise around him. The friction almost pain. Pure pleasure.

"Ahhhhhh!" Her vagina locked around him. Her muscles milked him. He couldn't move, ejaculated in her, throb after throb squeezing his cock.

His hips jerked against her. He couldn't pull out, didn't want to.

Aleea felt the hot jets of his fluid deep inside her. Her stomach quivered as his seed filled her. Her vagina pulsed around him. Every muscle in her body was taut. If he moved again, she'd shatter.

"Long and hard. Perfect." He caught her nipples between thumbs and fingers and squeezed.

Aleea shattered. She screamed. Her muscles spasmed wildly. White light, white heat enveloped her.

Raeder shouted as her inner muscles convulsed in a furious milking that continued to drag the essence from him until his balls were dry and she was filled with his cum.

He collapsed on top of her, breathing hard, his heart pounding. She was the best he'd ever had.

Aleea lay sprawled under him, sweat rolling down her face. She felt raw inside and out. He'd ridden her mercilessly, pushed her to heights that left her mind numb and her body so sensitive that the air moving over her face was painful.

How did she go home and live a normal life after this? She would have been better off never knowing what was possible. But she did know now. And she'd have to learn to live with that knowledge.

Her chin lifted. She'd been hot and needy before with no one to meet that need. She'd learn to live with being achy and desperate.

From some unseen source a voice filled the room. "Raeder, you're needed on the jump deck." The feminine voice was sharp, an abrupt reminder of *The Summit* and crew around them.

"I'm coming, Laiera." His breath brushed over Aleea's ear as he spoke.

“You already did,” Aleea muttered. She was too tired and limp to scratch the itch his breath had started in her ear.

Raeder bit back a smile. Aleea looked more than a little disgruntled, her face puckered in a frown. He wanted to tease her and that surprised him. He couldn’t remember the last time he’d had such a lighthearted thought.

“The jump team is ready.” Laiera’s voice was grating.

Angry at the interruption but knowing Laiera was right, he straightened. His hips pushed against Aleea. His penis shifted slightly inside her and he groaned.

She whimpered and gritted her teeth.

“Don’t move,” she begged in a hoarse voice. Her throat felt strained.

“He’d better move if he wants the Strider in orbit around Allouria by star fall. He can fuck you again later.” The woman’s cutting tone pierced the room.

“Enough, Laiera. Incom, end communication.” His tone was sharp, his expression hard. He would talk to Laiera about the respect he expected Aleea to receive. He stepped back, his slightly wilted length sliding free of Aleea’s sheath.

She cried out, arched up. Come oozed from her, thick and wet. She would never be able to describe the sensual sensation.

He reached down, traced around her opening.

“No!” She jackknifed up, caught his wrist in both hands and held tight. “Don’t touch me,” she ordered.

“You’re mine.” His voice was hard, his eyes narrowed. He pushed the tip of his finger into her. Soon he would make her understand what that meant.

She gave a choked cry, fell back on the table and quivered.

“What’s wrong?” He pulled his finger from her, caught her upper arms and lifted her back up.

Dazed, her eyes glazed, she shook her head. “If you touch me again, I really might die.” Her whispered words sounded melodramatic but she didn’t care. She hurt, every muscle was tired. Every time he touched her the lightning forked through her. Not as hot, not as hard, but even the smaller jolts were too much right now.

He released her arms.

She couldn’t hold herself upright, fell back against the table. Her head thumped. She opened her eyes enough to glare at him. If she was after tender and romantic, he wasn’t the man she was looking for.

“I’ll take you back to our chambers. I don’t want anyone finding you here like this.” His tone was all business. If he didn’t get away from her, he was going to fuck her again and he didn’t have time. Not right now.

She really wanted to hit him. Unfortunately she didn't have the energy. Besides, moving might send the wave of reaction through her that killed her and she had to be alive to go home.

Raeder adjusted himself and closed his trousers. He smelled like sex but there was nothing to do about it until he got them to his chambers.

Chapter 6

A short time later, Raeder strode away from his chambers and Aleea. The jump wasn't a stretch for his team but it would require two days' downtime afterward.

Allouria's historians and med-techs would have answers to what was happening between him and Aleea. He'd never experienced such explosive sex before. It had to have something to do with the *loralegoen*. He'd never produced such large amounts before.

They wouldn't get any answers until they reached home. Until then, they both could enjoy the effects even if Aleea fought them.

He almost smiled as he stepped into the deck-to-deck translocator. "Jump deck." Between one breath and the next, he was across *The Summit* and five decks and facing his jump crew—Kael, Pantair, Laiera and Tayera.

Behind them in the aqua-run, Fallyn, the ship's main healer, also waited. The ruffled fin around her fine-boned face was half-flared and scarlet. Whatever had upset her would have to wait. He wanted the jump done.

"Let's make the jump, people."

Tayera opened her mouth but quickly closed it again when Laiera, her twin, elbowed her.

"I want to know about his mate," Tayera hissed.

"Later." Laiera pushed her twin toward her jump seat.

"Let's make the jump." Raeder bit back a smile as he seated himself in the center seat of the five jump seats and pulled the shock webbing around himself. He would deal with the curiosity surrounding Aleea when they got to Allouria. For now she was safe in their chambers and his crew had a job to do.

He made sure the rest of the jump team was settled in the four chairs around him before initiating the intra-ship communication system.

"Incom."

"Ready." The sultry feminine voice filtered through the room.

"All crew members. Ready yourselves and *The Summit* for jump." He heard the echo of his voice from the corridor outside the jump deck. "Jump map." At his order the jump map appeared in the air around himself and the team. The universe swirled around them in holo-image perfection.

“Current location.” Mouria lit up like a beacon. “Destination, Allouria.” Halfway across the solar system map, another planet glowed blue-green.

“Incom.” His voice activated the inter-ship communications system again.

“Ready.”

“All crew members. Ready for jump.” He settled his hands over the arms of his chair, let his head fall back against the headrest.

“Engage crystals.”

At his order, four fist sized crystals levitated from depressions in the floor around him, each aligned with a member of his jump team.

He built the picture of their current location in his mind. The blue planet below him. The black void of space around the ship.

He breathed in and let it out slow. He closed his eyes and let his awareness spread, linked to the ship and beyond. He felt the Strider, was part of her. Each member of its crew was a living presence in his mind.

The ship became his body. He could feel the void of space around it, was aware of the Treshian trader below and to his port side. He extended farther and became aware of the second trader beyond the first and the Mourian cruiser between them. The three Allourian-Striders he’d called for were even farther out. His consciousness touched that of his cousin Traiden and his brothers, Myka and Cynjyn.

One with his ship, the vision of Mouria alive in his mind, he concentrated on building the vision of Allouria in his mind. When it was clear he began blending the two images, beginning the process of folding space with his mind.

Like laser beams of gold, their psychic power amplified by crystal, the telekinetic-telepathic power of each member of his jump team aligned with his. He felt the swell of power as five became one.

Power expanded in him, around him, honing itself. A tool to be used. Pure golden energy.

Mouria. Allouria. The images merged in his mind. He held the power of five, controlled it. Ready.

Shrill clanging broke the silence.

“Unauthorized use of translocator portal system attempted. Deck twelve. Unauthorized use of translocator portal system attempted. Deck twelve.”

Raeder slammed back into himself. Power evaporated as if it had never been. He stared at the ceiling of the jump deck, disoriented for a breath of time.

He ripped the shock webbing away from his body and lunged out of the reclining jump seat.

“Who is it?” he demanded, but already knew. Only one person aboard *The Summit* would attempt to translocate as a jump was under way. Only one person aboard wouldn’t know they were attempting suicide.

“Aleea NaDeera.”

Rage boiled through him at the sound of her name. She would have killed herself. And for what? To get away from him? To get away from the orgasmic sex they shared? Blast her, he was going to kill her himself.

He strode to the translocator and barked out, “Deck twelve.”

He stepped through the portal. The jump deck shimmered from view and Aleea shimmered into view.

She looked up and froze, her right hand poised in front of the holo-control.

“You were going somewhere?” He leaned against the side of the portal and crossed his arms over his chest. He wanted to hear her explain this. He wanted to see the look on her face when he told her just what could have happened.

Aleea took a deep breath. Raeder’s face was expressionless, his stance casual. Yet she had no doubt he was angry. No, that wasn’t strong enough. He was furious. His eyes were cold and hard. *What did he have to be so angry about?* He’d known she was going home the first chance she got.

“I—”

“You were going to translocate back to Mouria?” He interrupted.

“No. I—”

“Where were you going?” He interrupted again, his voice soft, almost gentle.

“Home.” There. Even he couldn’t interrupt a one-word answer.

The muscles in his jaw jumped. “Home. Where, exactly, is home?” His crystalline eyes raked over her. She shivered, fought the urge to cross her arms over her breasts. The red sheath she had put back on suddenly seemed more revealing than if she were naked and she was getting really tired of that sensation.

“My singlet on Centera.”

“Your singlet on Centera.” His eyes raked over her again.

She shivered. If he didn’t stop doing that, she was going to do something drastic, like hit him or run.

He straightened away from the portal support and stepped toward her.

She couldn’t help but move back as he advanced toward her. He was going to kill her.

“You were going to translocate to Centera from *The Summit* while we were preparing to jump.” He kept walking toward her.

Her back thumped into the far wall. She started edging to her left, unable to tear her gaze away from his piercing stare. He was stalking her. He was like a predator ready to lunge.

“Raeder. There’s no need to be upset. I was just going home. This,” she waved her arm to indicate the long corridor lit by recessed glows and the ship as a whole. “This isn’t what I went to Illusions for. I wanted a fantasy. A simple uncomplicated affair with a man who wasn’t real and couldn’t disappoint me. Someone I couldn’t disappoint.”

“You didn’t disappoint me. My cock is hard right now just from being close to you. I think about pushing through that tiny ring of muscle that guards your channel and I’m ready to come where I stand.

“And I haven’t disappointed you. You scream for me.” He reached out, caught her left breast and rubbed her nipple with his thumb. His eyes followed the movement as he stroked her turgid flesh. His eyelids lowered, his color darkened and his lips became fuller. “Neither of us has been disappointed.”

“But—”

“But what?” His eyes lifted to hers. His hand didn’t leave her breast. He stroked the tip, the motion almost rough. Rage was morphing to desire inside him. He was ready to explode and he was going to take her with him when he did. She’d tried to get away from him, could have killed herself.

“The fantasy—”

“Is reality.” There was a sharp edge to his tone. His hand closed over her breast in a tight grip that was just short of painful. “Reality is that you belong to me.” He stepped closer, his eyes glowing green. “Reality is that you are going to Allouria with me.” He released her breast, lowered his hands to her waist and lifted her against the wall. “Reality is that you could have killed yourself.” He shoved his hips between her thighs forcing her legs around him and pinned her against the wall with his weight. He would make her accept reality.

“Killed myself? What do you mean? That doesn’t make any sense. People translocate every day.”

He frowned at her. Could she really not have known? “Do you understand what a jump is?”

She shrugged and nodded. “A group of psychics bend space. You literally jump from one point to another, eliminating the whole line in between.”

“It’s a dimensional shift. We go into nothing and emerge into something. If you had translocated while we jumped, you would cease to exist. You would have been lost in the shift if you had succeeded.” Fresh rage washed through him. He had come too close to losing her.

Aleea’s jaw dropped. “You mean... I would have... I could have...” She shook her head. She would have killed herself and never have known she was in danger. And it wouldn’t have been Raeder’s fault.

“Hold on to me,” he ordered. He had to know she was alive, to feel it for himself.

She did as he said, shivering as her arms circled his neck. She needed to be held. That had been too close.

His eyes were wild, his teeth gritted. He caught the neckline of her sheath in both hands and ripped. Shreds of the thin material fell away held in place only where his body pinned hers to the wall.

“Never again.” His voice was low, guttural. “If you had succeeded...” He shuddered, dropped his head and devoured her breast.

She arched. A whimper caught in her throat.

He nipped and sucked, pulled and licked. “You’re mine.” He growled from around her flesh. “Your home is with me.” He tore the sheath free from where it was caught at her thighs.

She didn’t see what he did to his pants, didn’t care. His hot flesh scorched her. The head of his cock didn’t nudge or press, it slammed into her, a weapon used with the intent to conquer.

“Raeder!” She grabbed his shoulders and held on.

He surged into her. She was alive and she was his.

The friction of his flesh cleaving hers was electrifying. Her breasts bobbed with each thrust. His flesh slapped against hers. It was instant fire raging through her veins.

“Come for me, blast you.” His voice rasped. “You’re alive. I want to feel it.” He pounded into her, ground his pelvis against her with each forward thrust. She groaned each time he hit her engorged clit.

“Come, Aleea. Come for me.” He hammered into her, faster, harder.

Every muscle in her tightened more until her very being clenched around him. Her back arched. Her mouth opened in a silent scream. Her vagina spasmed in the clutch and release of orgasm. The world was an electric storm and she was its center.

A low growl erupted from Raeder’s throat as her hot, wet channel milked him, tighter than a fist. He slammed into her again and again. He wanted to stay in her forever. He wanted to fill her with his seed, to brand her as his. He wanted to tie her to his bed where she would be safe and available to him any time he needed to sink into her, taste her, hold her.

He exploded. Pelvis tight against hers he tried to drive further forward without pulling out. His semen filled her. Hot and thick. And he wanted more. More of her. More of him in her.

He lowered his forehead to the top of her head and stood unmoving. Her inner muscles quivered around him intermittently as aftershocks raced through her.

“I thought beds were made for sex. I have to say, though, you make really good use of walls.”

Her teasing words grated on his frayed nerves. “You would have died.” He wanted her to understand the enormity of what she’d almost done. She hadn’t wanted to die, but she would have killed herself anyway. He couldn’t let it happen again.

Aleea couldn’t move. Could barely think. “I just did.” How did it keep getting better?

Raeder caught her hair, forced her face up to his. “Don’t make a joke of this. You would have been dead.”

She raised her chin even higher, caught his hand in her own and yanked it out of her hair. “I understand that and I’m dealing with it my way. If you don’t like it, tough.” She couldn’t change who she was for him and wouldn’t if she could. He’d already said he wouldn’t have picked her. Well, if he kept her with him, he was going to find out he really wouldn’t have picked her.

Raeder pulled out of her, making her groan at the drag of his flesh against hers. He caught her by her upper arms to hold her in place when she would have stepped away from him. "Promise me you'll never do that again."

Aleea glared up at him. "Do you think I'm stupid? Of course I won't do it again."

He wanted to shake her. He'd never been so angry with anyone in his life. "Your home is with me. Where I go you go, also. Some singlet on Centera is not where you belong. *The Summit*, Allouria, anywhere I am is where your home is. You're never to try and leave me again. Do you understand?" He did shake her.

She grasped his arms to steady herself. If he shook her again, she was going to throw up on him. That would teach him. "Raeder. I told you I needed to go home. I wasn't trying to kill myself. Why would I? Dead wouldn't get me home even if it would get me away from you."

He swept her up in his arms and strode down the corridor to his chambers. She was never going to get away from him whether she believed it or not. She was his. Born for him, found for him. Until he was sure she understood where her place was, she was never going to be out of his sight again.

The door slid open and he strode inside.

"Incom." He didn't wait for a response but kept talking. "Kael, disband the jump team until the first hour of the light cycle. We'll make the jump then."

He set Aleea on her feet, caught her arm when she would have walked away.

Tayera's voice cut in. "Raeder..."

"First hour." Kael's voice overrode Tayera's.

"Incom. Cut communication until otherwise ordered by me." Raeder ended any chance of interruption.

"It is done," the voice of *The Summit* murmured.

* * * * *

Tayera stood unmoving as the others filed off the jump deck through the translocator. Her chest heaved as she fought for breath. It felt like someone had ripped a hole in her chest. He couldn't do this, bring some slut aboard and expect them all to put her first.

"Who is she?"

She jumped at the question, spun to see Fallyn watching her from the aqua-run. The Merwoman fin crest was fully flared and scarlet.

"I don't know, but something has to be done about her. She can't come aboard *The Summit* and ruin everything. Raeder is ours."

Mine, Fallyn thought. *Raeder is mine.*

“You’re right, Tayera. Something must be done.”

Tayera took a step closer to the Merwoman. “You care for Raeder, don’t you, Fallyn?”

“Yes.” Her voice was a mere whisper of sound.

Tayera bit back a triumphant smile. She had an ally. “I have an idea, but it will take both of us. We have to be ready when the opportunity arises. You...”

* * * * *

Raeder turned on Aleea, furious that she had tried to walk away from him.

“Where were you going?” he demanded.

“I can’t just stand here naked.”

He liked her just as she was, but he needed her to listen and she was more likely to do that clothed.

Keeping his hold on her arm, he walked with her to the wardrobe and picked out a dress for her. He stepped back, watched as she slid the dress over her head, the material slipping down to hide her full breasts, her nipples red and swollen from his mouth on them.

Raeder’s lips thinned as she pulled the hem of the dress over her hips, hiding the sweet juncture of her thighs. He wanted to be between them.

Taking her arm again he walked back into the bedroom, turned to Aleea and grasped her shoulders. She had to understand why he was doing what he was doing. He needed her and she had to understand why.

His gaze met hers and held. “Have you heard of the Rilirian Field?”

Aleea snorted and wrinkled her nose. Why was he bringing up a myth and a legend now? “Who hasn’t?”

“What do you know?”

“The same story every child knows. The Rilirian Field is a fantastic force field created by the Darkeen Princes and maintained by their psychic ability. No one can enter Allourian space uninvited. They smack up against the invisible shield that protects Allourian space.”

She summarized the story she’d heard a thousand times growing up and some of the childhood thrill sparked though her. She and her friends had played for hours at being the Darkeen King who had created the Alliance and his imperial princess. She had always wanted to be the princess but usually got stuck being a guard. Even that had been exciting because she’d been a part of something so big and wonderful. It didn’t seem real that she was standing here with a Darkeen prince, that he claimed her as his.

“Incom.” His call brought an immediate response.

“Ready.”

“Holo-image. Allouria, crystal cavern. Rilirian Field projection.”

Aleea’s mouth dropped open as a planet approximately fourteen inches in diameter sprang into existence in front of her. It was like an opal, verdant green and deep blue swirled together on the slowly circling orb. She’d never seen anything so perfect.

“Allouria.” Something in Raeder’s voice made her look up. His eyes were trained on the planet. His expression gave nothing away but his voice made her want to reach out to him.

“The crystal cavern is the heart of Mearyn Palace.”

Allouria disappeared and a palace of ivory marble on a white cliff sprang to life. It looked over a turquoise ocean.

The palace shot toward her.

She stepped back, her heart thumping in her chest. Before she could make a sound, the grand entrance and the inside of the palace passed by in a dizzying kaleidoscope of corridors, rooms and stairs. She felt breathless and she hadn’t moved.

The images slowed at the base of a stairway that descended through stone. A huge cavern opened before her. A single ray of light shone down through a perfectly round hole cut through the ceiling at the very center of the room. Instead of being dark, the room was almost blindingly bright.

Crystals, some clear, others varying shades of white, gold, green, and pink, made up the walls of the cavern. Each surface, flat or jagged, reflected or refracted the light creating a rainbow of hues throughout the room.

“It’s beautiful.” She stepped forward, reached out to touch a rose-hued crystal. Her hand passed through the image. Sighing, she turned in a circle until she’d seen the entire cavern. Allouria. Even the name was magical.

“One of my ancestors, Aviar, discovered Allouria. He was a pirate and the one man Emperor Sularen wanted dead more than any other.”

“Aviar. I didn’t think he was real.”

A half-smile lifted the corners of Raeder’s hard mouth. He looked happy, something she’d never seen before.

“He was an outlaw. He took what he wanted, created an empire and did everything he could to ensure it survived. The crystal cavern was the heart of his plan.” An image of a tall, heavily muscled man with rugged good looks replaced the crystal cavern for a moment. There was little resemblance between him and Raeder except startlingly vivid crystal green eyes.

“Why are you telling me this?”

Raeder caught her hand in his and drew her to him. He positioned her in front of him, her back to his front. He twined his fingers with hers, wrapped his arms around her and just held her. She was warm and real, alive in his arms. He liked having her against him.

“I want you to understand why I won’t let you go.” He pressed his lips to her head. She was so small and perfect and so fragile.

The crystal cavern once again filled the room.

“Aviar discovered the cavern while searching the planet. He brought his bride, the emperor’s only daughter, to the cavern to consummate their union.”

Aviar appeared at the center of the cavern, a small redheaded woman with him. They lay naked on the sandy floor. His hips were lodged between her spread thighs, his mouth at her breast.

“I see your interest in sex is a family trait.”

Raeder grinned at her acerbic tone. “It’s a good thing I found someone whose interest matches my own.”

A blush mantled Alea’s cheeks. She smiled but didn’t reply.

Raeder continued his story. “The emperor wasn’t happy about his daughter being with a man he wanted dead. His men caught up with them in the cavern.”

Men dressed in royal blue flight suits surrounded the naked couple. In their palms were the forerunners of the lasers that were now implanted in the palms of law enforcement such as the emperor’s guard.

“In defending Princess Riliria, Aviar found out the full extent of the cavern’s power when coupled with his psychic ability.”

A guardsman fired at Aviar. The energy bolt hit an invisible wall, bounded back and hit the man who had fired it.

The cavern disappeared and the planet took its place. A flotilla of Striders, identifiable as the emperor’s by the double nova insignia on their hulls, ringed the planet. The lead vessel fired on the planet but the bolt of energy rebounded, struck and crippled the ship.

“The Rilirian Field.” Alea’s words were a whisper. All the stories she’d grown up listening to and not believing were true.

“Aviar found he could extend the field through space by placing crystal deposits on other planets. He also found that his royal bride was his perfect genetic complement. When they were bound, the field was stronger. The resonance of their psychic energy together was nearly one hundred times that of either of them alone.”

“He created Illusions to find genetic matches for his heirs.” She repeated what he’d told her before. Everything he was doing made sense. It wasn’t flattering, but it made sense.

“Exactly.”

“But there are several Darkeen Princes. You don’t need me.”

“Incom, current Rilirian Field projection.”

The universe shrank to fit in the sleeping chambers. Suns spun in place. Planets circled them and moons circled the planets. It was like being a god, looking down on space. Gold lines crisscrossed a small section.

“Each Darkeen generation has added to the family’s holdings. Some planets have come to us by requests to be part of the Alliance, and we gain others through war. One couple on one planet cannot power the whole field.”

As she watched golden lines began to wink out of existence.

“A genetic mate has not been found for an Allourian Prince or lord in two generations. Until you.” He untangled their hands and turned her to face him.

He cupped her face in his hands. “The Field is failing. The House of Allouria is vulnerable and like any powerful family, mine has enemies. If you had succeeded in activating the translocator, you would have destroyed your life and you would have put the lives of billions in jeopardy.”

“Nothing like a little pressure.” Her heart stuttered in her chest. Her hands grew cold. She accepted responsibility as well as the next person but this was beyond what anyone should have to deal with.

Raeder released her face and caught her hands in his. He raised them to his mouth and blew warm air over them, his gaze still tangled with hers. One day she would come to realize what she meant to him and to his people.

The sexual heat in his eyes, his breath on her skin warmed her inside and out. It took a moment for her mind to re-engage. Just looking at him made her spacey.

“I realize your family must have enemies, but is the Rilirian Field really necessary? There are no pirates or solar wars anymore. Hasn’t the Field outlived its usefulness?”

His eyes grew cold and his lips thinned. The muscle in his jaw jumped. “I wish that were true. Incom. Show a scanning image of Callen Minor’s surface.” He gave a date as he released Aleea’s hands and walked away.

She watched as a golden planet appeared. The view telescoped in at a dizzying pace. She almost fell over, found herself standing in a teeming city square.

She watched antigravity floaters speed by over head. People hurried about their business. Twin suns filled the sky. White garments and head coverings were standard wear.

Amidst the bustling people, a group of children, hemmed in by a mobile safety fence raced past her. A harried-looking older woman scurried close behind.

Two little girls, one with long golden curls, the other with short dark hair had their heads together, giggling at the back of the group. Their headscarves were pushed down around their shoulders.

She couldn’t help but smile. They looked happy.

“Incom. Show scanning image of Callen Minor’s surface.” He gave another date. His arm slid around her waist as the image changed.

She gasped. Her hands flew to her mouth. Buildings, busy people, laughing children. All were gone.

Tears stung her eyes. All that was left was rubble. Black craters surrounded by starburst burn marks, evidence of where power bolts had struck.

“What happened?” Her chest was tight. The image of the two little girls filled her mind. They were gone. *Who would destroy a whole city? Who could knowingly kill such beautiful children?*

Raeder’s arms tightened around her. “Sharakan Striders.” His voice was harsh.

“Why?” She wrapped her arms around herself. *Why would anyone destroy a planet? How could they live with what they had done?*

“We don’t know.”

Tears slowly trailed down her cheeks. She leaned back and looked up at him. “How long will it take us to get to Allouria?” She wouldn’t allow innocent people to die if she could help it. She would do what she could to help and then she would return to Centera.

Raeder leaned down and kissed one tear bright eye then the other. “One jump.”

“Then let’s jump.” Chin lifted, eyes bright with tears, she looked sad but determined.

“I think we’ll wait until tomorrow. I’ve got other things in mind for tonight.”

Aleea shivered at the open lust in his eyes. It dulled the image of the two little girls in her mind and she needed that.

“Shouldn’t we make the jump now?” If he kept making love to her, she was never going to want to leave. And the look in his eyes said he wanted sex.

“No.” Raeder grasped the neckline of the peacock blue dress and ripped it from neck to hem.

She gasped as the material fell to the floor.

“I would have taken it off.” Making love against walls, ripping her clothes off. What other strange habits did he have?

She looked up, surprised by the rueful grin lighting up Raeder’s hard-edged features. She would never have guessed he could look so boyish.

“I’ve always wanted to do that. It could become a habit with you.” He tugged at the neckline of his own suit and it fell away. He swung her into his arms and strode to the bed. He tossed her onto it, stood looking down at her, fists braced on his hips.

She opened her mouth to protest, gasped as he came down on top of her.

He caught his cock in one hand, guided the helmeted head to the opening of her vagina and forged inside. “Every time. So tight. Hot. Embracing me.”

She winced, sore but receptive. Blast but she was going to have to learn to say no. It was something she

could work on later.

Raeder wrapped his arms around her. He rolled them over so she was on top, still impaled on his hard, thick rod. He needed her to be a part of him now as he shared his pain.

She tried to lift up.

His arms tightened around her. "Go to sleep, Aleea."

"I thought you had plans?" Blast him, she was ready for a full course of sex and he told her to sleep? She was going to kill him.

"I do. Sleep."

Frowning, she rubbed her head into his chest. He'd gotten her all excited about nothing.

"Next time, tell me that's your plan," she grumbled. It was like being all dressed up with nowhere to go.

His arms tightened around her. "That's my plan for now. Not my only plan." He lowered his hands to her buttocks and squeezed.

She squirmed, moaning as the motion moved her on his hard shaft.

"Incom. The shoe." His voice was low and rough. He didn't want to look at it, it hurt every time he did. But he wanted Aleea to have it.

Frowning, Aleea lifted her head from his chest. "The shoe?"

A tiny pink shoe, the toe scuffed, materialized on the bed beside them.

Raeder picked it up, cradled it in his hand for a moment before handing it to Aleea. "A reminder from Callen Minor." His voice was thick with emotion.

Aleea's breath caught as she took the shoe from him. She clutched it in her fist and let the tears fall. She wouldn't go home until she knew that nothing would ever happen to an innocent child again.

Raeder pulled her head down to his chest and brushed her hair back from her face. She didn't know it but she was crying for both of them.

"Go to sleep, Aleea," he whispered. He held her close, savored the feel of her sheath holding his erection tight. She was where she was meant to be, safe in his arms.

Slowly she relaxed against him and snuggled her head against his chest. His heart was a reassuring beat under her ear.

"Raider."

"Hmmm?"

"I'll go with you and do what I can to help. Then I'll go home."

Unseen by her, a smile lifted his lips. His arms tightening around her body was his only response.

She sighed and shifted to get more comfortable, bit her lip at the tugging sensation of his flesh deep inside her. Under her, his breathing slowed and his heart rate did the same.

Tears stung her eyes and a sad smile tilted her lips. She wasn't going to cry any more. He needed her even if he would never love her. That was more than she had ever dreamed.

An ache grew in her chest, made it hard to breathe. She closed her eyes. What she needed was sleep. Everything would be better when she was rested. As sleep pulled her into its black arms, she whispered her thoughts aloud.

"I don't want to love you."

Not by a single breath or tensed muscle did Raeder give away that he'd heard her soft-spoken words. He held her as her breathing deepened, a catch in it belying her attempt to hide her unshed tears.

The protective, possessive feelings he had for her grew inside him. She was his and she would love him. He would accept nothing less.

Sheathed in her hot depths, her slight weight over him, he let himself sleep. She was his and he would never let her go.

Chapter 7

Aleea woke to the feel of Raeder's mouth on her left nipple. He must have pulled out of her at some point. She felt empty without him inside her. She lifted her hands to cradle his head and arched into him. He seemed to be fascinated by her breasts and she wasn't about to protest.

She loved having his mouth on her, sucking her breast, the pull, the tug and squeeze on her nipple. The sharp nip of his teeth that always surprised her and made her inner muscles clench. Stars, had she been missing out!

He released the long, rosy tip. He licked it, playing with her, before his mouth closed over her other breast.

She closed her eyes, arched into his hot, wet mouth. Every sensation went right to her womb. Electricity jolted through her. She writhed against him. Stars, she was going to come out of her skin. She couldn't hold still. She was wet, felt empty without him stretching her channel.

"I want you inside me." Her voice was hushed and pleading.

He sucked harder, pulled her nipple taut in the vacuum of his mouth. He wanted to be inside her too, but he wanted her hotter first.

"Please. Fuck me," she begged. She couldn't hold still, and spread her legs. Would he take her invitation? "I need you inside me. Now."

Raeder released her breast, nipping at the tip as he did. He didn't want to leave the enticing fullness of

her breasts. Each small mound filled his mouth perfectly. And she was extraordinarily sensitive.

He pulled back, watched her hips moving on the bed, her legs splayed wide. He stroked one finger across her pussy. She was wet, shivered under even that light touch.

“Raeder. Please.”

He smiled. Her words should have been a plea but they weren’t. They were a demand.

He looked into her eyes, passion-hazed and dark. Her lips were parted, the tip of her tongue peeking out. He nearly groaned at the sight of that pink tip. He wanted her mouth on him, to feel her sucking his cock. Thinking about it made him burn.

He dropped his head, slanted his mouth over hers and devoured. He settled over her, careful to keep his weight from settling on her as he pushed his tongue into her mouth. He stroked and circled her tongue with his, nipped at it as it followed his into his mouth. Her hips lifted against him, her legs spread wide, her pussy wet.

He lifted his head and stared at her mouth. He swooped down and nipped her full lower lip.

“Raeder!” She lifted toward him. “Fuck me.” Her eyes were bright, her tone demanding.

“No.” Raeder smiled. “I don’t think you’re ready yet.”

Her lips thinned. She lifted her hands and pushed at his chest. If she could get him on his back, she’d impale herself on him. She’d like to see him stop then.

His brows rose but he didn’t budge. She was so small, did she really think she could move him if he didn’t want to move?

She lifted her legs to wrap around his waist. Blast him, if he wouldn’t take her, she would take him.

Raeder used his legs to pin hers to the bed and brought his weight down on her. His expression was amused.

No doubt he knew how mad that made her, too. Teeth gritted, she shoved her hand between their torsos, wriggled it between their melded abdomens. When she got a hold of him, she’d teach him what teasing was.

He caught one wrist, pulled her arm over her head and manacled it in his other hand. He did the same with the other. He liked the way it arched her up to him, her nipples pointing at him, begging for his mouth.

Her breasts heaved with each breath she took. She was his to do anything he wanted with and he loved knowing that.

“We’ve got until the first hour. Before then you’ll have my cock shoved so deep and tight inside your channel, you’ll think it will never come out.

“But first I’m going to taste you. I’m going to tease that jewel at the top of your sex with my tongue and then I’m going to suck it into my mouth and listen to you scream. And when I put my tongue in you and

feast on your pussy you'll come for me."

His fingers circled the opening to her vagina. She was hot and wet for him.

Her stomach clenched at his words. Her channel tightened. "You can't put your mouth... You can't suck..." She couldn't complete the thought. Thinking about it seemed naughty, wicked even. Having him talk about it, talking about it herself, was more than exciting. She was likely to come just from him talking. "I couldn't stand that again. It was too much." Heat rushed up her neck and into her face.

Pure possession made his expression even fiercer. He pressed one finger against her clit and rubbed. "You're mine, Aleea." His tone brooked no argument.

Aleea squirmed. Did he really think she was going to argue when her insides were quivering and her heart pounding? She couldn't even catch her breath. She wanted everything he talked about. Everything and more.

"Do I get to taste you, too?" That was an exciting thought. What would he feel like in her mouth? What would he taste like? Sucking and biting his nipples had been one of the most carnal experiences of her life. Would sucking his cock be like that?

His eyes, heavy-lidded, glowed. "Yes." One finger pushed into her channel.

She licked her lips. Her hips rocked. His finger wasn't enough, she wanted his cock. "Are you all talk or is there going to be some action to go along with it?"

Raeder's head dipped. He nipped her bottom lip in punishment. "You always have something to say, don't you? Save that mouth and tongue for me. I'll teach you how to use them right." He pulled his finger from her clinging heat.

Her hips tried to follow. She shuddered.

"You'll find I'm an avid student."

He strung a line of stinging kisses down her chest, between her breasts to her navel.

"Another hole to be explored." His voice was a low growl against her.

She shivered as he ringed the small depression with stinging bites and soothing licks.

He explored with his tongue, making her quiver. Before he was done, he'd make her come.

She'd never been so wet. And her nipples were so tight they would make dents in wood. "Raeder, do something."

"I am doing something." His breath scorched over her pelvis, preceding the nip of his teeth and the stroke of his tongue. He blew on the curls covering her mound.

His breath felt cool on the wet lips of her pussy. She shuddered, couldn't force breath into her lungs. What would it feel like? His mouth, tongue, teeth on her pussy, her clit?

Her stomach knotted at the thought. Stars! Would she survive? "At the rate you're going I'll be too old

to enjoy it when you got there.”

He nuzzled her curls with his nose.

Her muscles quivered in anticipation. She wanted this. She’d dreamed about a man’s mouth on her. Would it be as good as she’d imagined? Would it be everything she’d read it was?

He pushed her legs farther apart.

She closed her eyes.

He spread her nether lips with his fingers.

She arched off the bed. Every muscle in her body was so tight, she’d be lucky if she didn’t break.

His tongue stroked the folds of her labia, teasing the sensitive flesh.

She quivered and melted.

He licked and nibbled, gentling her down from the tense anticipation that gripped her. She was already riding high and it had nothing to do with him. And he didn’t like that.

She moved against his mouth. She’d expected more. This was pleasant, warm and soothing. A bit disappointing but she could enjoy it even if it didn’t send her to the stars.

“Aleea.”

She opened her eyes to find him watching her. He looked up from the vee of her legs, met her eyes. His mouth was wet, his lips red.

“I want you to come because of my mouth on you, not your anticipation of it. You’re mine. Any thoughts you have, I want to be about me, about what we’re doing. Not about what you’ve read, seen or experienced before. Remember that.”

She frowned. His words sounded like a warning and a threat.

He lowered his head and flicked her clit with his tongue.

Aleea moaned.

His tongue fluttered over her clit.

Electricity jolted through her. Her hips bucked against him.

He didn’t stop, kept licking. He wanted every response she had to give.

She couldn’t take it. It was too much. Lightning. Bolts of pure energy lasered from her throbbing clit to her womb and nipples. Her skin was hot, her vagina clenched. She felt like one giant pulse.

She writhed on the bed.

He kept licking, flicking.

Her vagina clamped tighter. She tried to close her thighs but couldn't lift them off the bed.

"Raeder, it's too much. Oh, Stars. Stars!" He was killing her. Did he know that?

He released her. "Come for me. Show me how much you love this."

Blast him, why had he let go? She'd been about to explode.

He sucked at her pussy lips.

She cried out, her head thrashing on the bed.

Suck and release. The fast, changing pressure made her whimper and writhe. The deep, clenching sensation kept growing. It was bigger yet harder to reach. She was going to die.

"Come for me." His words blew hot breath over the swollen nub. His tongue was a fast whip on her clit.

She tried not to move, couldn't hold still. She wanted release, to fly into space, but she also wanted the deep clenching, the fierce climb that was almost pain to never end.

"Come." It was a fierce order. His mouth closed on her clit and he sipped at the ultra-sensitive bundle of nerves.

Aleea died. Every muscle in her body convulsed. She couldn't breathe. Her heart stopped. Every muscle exploded. She shuddered where she lay, quivered inside and out.

Raeder didn't let her come down. He licked and sucked. His broad tongue swept her lips, flicked her clit. He knew she could go higher.

Starbursts of sensation rocketed through her.

He thrust his tongue into her, lapped at her.

The sensations went on, higher and higher. Her eyes rolled back in her head. Everything went black.

Raeder felt her go completely limp. He lapped one last time before lifting himself over her. His penis jerked with the need to be embedded inside her. He caught his randy member in one fist, guided the rounded head to her entrance and waited, holding tight, fighting himself. He didn't feel whole when he wasn't inside her.

Her eyelids twitched, lifted.

He shoved forward, forged into her fast and deep, not stopping until she was filled with his length, stretched by his breadth.

Aleea's mouth opened but no sound escaped. Her eyes were dilated, her face, neck and chest red.

"Your channel is hot. Tight. Made for me."

His penis jerked inside her. Even lying unmoving, he couldn't hold still inside her. She moaned and he gritted his teeth. Her nipples were red and tight, begging for him to suck and bite them.

He'd never get enough of her. If they lived to be a hundred, he would still want her.

He pulled back, slammed forward.

Her eyelids fluttered and closed. Her back arched, bowed off the bed.

His neck arched as he pounded into her. The slap of flesh against flesh. The wet sound of her sheath trying to hold him.

She clamped down on him and he exploded. He shook as he ejaculated, his semen jetting into her endlessly.

He collapsed on her. He didn't want to crush her but couldn't move. She'd taken everything from him. His penis was soft inside her, still caught deep. Her muscles clenched and released around him, trying to milk him. She was greedy and he didn't have anything left to give.

"Wow." There was awe in her low, hoarse murmur.

Raeder rolled them until she was on top, his penis still embedded in her heat. "Wow, indeed."

"Raeder—"

Alarms blared. Shouts filled the corridor outside their room.

Kael's voice ripped through the noise. "Raeder. Allouria is under attack."

Raeder rolled out of bed and to his feet in one smooth motion. His expression was murderous as he strode into his wardrobe.

"*Sharakan*." He bit out the word, unhesitating. "How many?"

"The report is seven."

Aleea's chest tightened. Her heart skipped a beat. One well-manned Strider could devastate a planet. Seven would obliterate any sign that life had ever existed. She'd seen what had happened on Callen Minor. How many starships had been there?

"Are there any Striders in Allourian space?" Raeder demanded.

"*The Derlik, The Heritage and The Plaalan*."

Raeder's jaw firmed. Three Striders, two of them pleasure cruisers, only one a battle Strider, against seven battle-ready Sharakan ships.

"Call the jump team." He pulled on a jumpsuit and motioned Aleea to dress.

"The team is on the jump deck."

“Aleea and I will be there in a moment. Call up the holo-map.”

“Done.”

His jaw tight, Raeder finished dressing.

“What can I do?”

Aleea’s hand was soft and warm on his back. Her open, generous question was more than he deserved. She had wanted a fantasy. He’d given her a reality that could kill her.

He turned to her. Her eyes were dark, her expression a mix of worry and fear. He brushed her hair from her face. Beyond what she meant to him and his people, she was a special woman.

“Stay alive.” He kissed her once, hard, before stepping away.

Her eyes were steady on his. Her expression slowly changed, fear fading as it was replaced by determination.

She turned away, grabbed her clothes that now hung next to his and dressed. When she was done, Raeder grabbed her hand in his and strode out of the bedchamber. At the translocator he activated the holo-controls, set the jump deck as destination and pushed Aleea through the portal in front of him.

Aleea stumbled onto the jump deck and her mouth fell open. The room was alive with spinning planets, glowing moons and golden suns. It was like standing suspended in space with no need of a vessel to keep safe. It was dizzying and wonderful.

Her chest felt tight with the bubble of awe growing inside her. This is what it would be like to be one of the fabled space angels. Complete freedom. No boundaries. The wonders of space hers to explore. She could stand there and look at it forever and never get tired.

“We have a jump to make. Let’s do it. Fallyn, monitor Aleea throughout the jump.”“ Raeder caught Aleea’s arm and pulled her with him as he strode toward the chair at the center of the deck. Four other chairs made a square around it.

Aleea’s eyes rounded. She was facing five people with varying degrees of surprise on their faces.

She recognized one of the two men. He’d been on the dining deck with Raeder. The other man had a very feline air, a large and dangerous cat studying her.

There were two identical women and a third female in a huge water tank that made up one wall of the jump deck. She was beautiful in an otherworldly way. Her body was scaled from the waist down, each scale a shiny, brilliant turquoise. Instead of legs she had a fin about the size and length of a human woman’s legs pressed together.

A fin, fiery red and ruffled, edged around the base of her tail, up her sides and flared out under her arms when she lifted them. Her arms and hands were human, as were her torso, shoulders and head. She was built on voluptuous lines, her breasts full, her nipples pointed and blue tinged.

As Aleea watched, purple so dark it was almost black, appeared in jagged lines through the ruffled red

fin that framed the perfect, fine-boned face.

“A jump? With an extra person on the jump deck?” One of the identical women yelped.

Aleea jumped, startled. She looked away from the Merwoman to the two identical women, unsure which had spoken. She wanted introductions, to know who the people were but Raeder didn't pause.

Jaw tight, Raeder seated himself in the center chair and pulled Aleea down on his lap. “Take your positions.” He didn't answer to his team.

“Raeder—” He didn't let Aleea finish her sentence. He yanked her back against his chest with enough force, her breath whooshed out. He didn't have time to deal with insecurities and insubordination. His brother was facing seven Sharakan Striders with only *The Heritage* and two pleasure cruisers to back him up.

Aleea lay back against Raeder with a harrumph. “I'm getting tired of being yanked and pulled. And if I have something to say I'm going to say it.” She kept her tone low as she looked at the four people settling into the seats surrounding Raeder's. Their expressions weren't hostile, exactly, but they obviously weren't happy to have her on the jump deck with them.

Raeder pulled the shock webbing over both of them. It stretched to try and accommodate them, snuggled down to hold them both in the chair.

“Ready?” Raeder asked.

Aleea ignored the fact that it was a statement rather than a question and made to the jump team rather than her alone. She kept her voice low enough only he heard. “Since you're going to ignore me and the concerns of your jump team, why ask?” She'd never met anyone as high-handed as him before.

His arms tightened around her, forced her even closer but ignored her question.

Under her bottom, his cock was hard. It was like sitting on a pole, not the most comfortable thing she'd ever done. Especially with her pussy getting wet in response. She was going to have to figure out how to keep her body under control.

“Ready.” The deep, gravelly voice of the man from the dining deck rumbled around the empty deck.

“Ready.” One of the identical women spoke next followed almost immediately by her double.

Ready,” her double said almost at the same time.

The feline male was last, his tone languid. “Ready.”

Aleea tried to hold completely still. Everyone might be ready, but not nearly as ready as Raeder. His cock was a thick ridge under her, hot and pulsing. She wanted to be naked, to have him hold her like this, reclining with her on top and his hard length impaling her. He would have free access to her breasts. He could pluck her nipples, reach between her legs and rub her clit. And all the while she would be riding his rigid cock.

His hand settled low on her pelvis. He wanted her with him yet at the same time he wanted her somewhere else safe.

She bit her cheek to keep from moaning. They were going to have to have a serious discussion about when he could touch her and when he could not.

“Incom. Present location, Mouria. Jump destination, Allouria.”

At the name, frissons of excitement spiraled through Alea and she shivered. She was going to see Allouria, to become a part of its history.

Two planets several feet apart caught her attention. One blue, the other blue swirled with green. She’d seen the second one once before, when Raeder had been telling her the history of the Rilirian Field.

The two planets were brighter than the other spheres that filled the room.

“Do we have a connection with anyone aboard *The Heritage*?”

“I do.” Pantair met Raeder’s icy gaze, his own flat and cold. “Mylee is linked. I’ve got all the ships above Allouria pinpointed.”

Raeder nodded and settled back in his chair. “Traiden, Myka and Cynjyn?”

“They’re ready.” Kael’s voice was flat, devoid of any emotion, his eyes hard and cold.

His cousin and brothers’ ships, *The SunRunner*, *The Jaedred* and *The Kulurik* would follow close behind. None of them would be in any shape to fight, but they would do everything they could to keep Allouria safe. Even die. “Let’s jump.”

The others followed his lead.

The sensation of her consciousness expanding took Alea by surprise. She clutched Raeder’s arms, felt him behind and beneath her, but it was like a ghost sensation.

Around her, the ship was alive. It contained life. Bright embers. People. Beings whose joys and sorrows were suddenly hers. She could feel the emptiness of space. There was nothing. No pressure, no gravity. Nothing to hold her in place. Nothing.

She tried to breathe. Her heart thumped in her chest, the rhythm off. Her head was spinning. Or the room was. Where was she?

Below her, the blue planet spun in a lazy circle. Liquid gold showed around the left side. The sun was rising.

A ship filled the space to her left. Big. Heavy. She felt drawn to it. There were three other ships beyond it. All of them dragged at her.

Her mind fractured. She could see another planet. The blue-green planet. She was above it.

She frowned. She couldn’t be above it. The blue one was below her.

The thought was wrenched from her mind. She gasped at the ripping, tearing sensation. Breathed a sigh of relief as everything went numb.

Dazed, she watched as the pictures merged in her mind. There were no boundaries. Nothing held her together. The images of the two planets, the space around them, merged. The blue-green planet grew brighter and brighter. She could feel it. The sun to its left was blindingly bright.

The blue planet faded. The ships beside her disappeared. She ceased to exist, became one with Raider.

His heartbeat pulsed through her. She could feel the adrenaline surging through him. She could feel his muscles tense, the way his senses were painfully heightened. His thoughts, conscious and unconscious filled her mind.

Zaen could hold out until he reached him. Four Allourian-Striders arriving above the planet at the same time gave them the element of surprise. It was the only advantage they had, the only one they would need.

Deeper, on a visceral level, his thoughts were of her.

Her ass against his crotch. He wanted to push his cock into her cunt, bury himself in her. She made him weak and powerful at the same time.

Would her nipples be diamond hard right now? He wanted them in his mouth. He loved the way she gasped, her body undulating against him when he bit her.

Suddenly it wasn't just Raeder and her. She didn't want to give up the deep link with him, didn't have a choice.

There was Kael, intense, fierce and focused. One of the twins, afraid but determined. The other twin, bored and almost...uncaring? She shook her head. She had to be wrong. She would ask Raeder about it later, couldn't think about it now.

She felt Pantair last, balked at the frenetic energy of his mind, tightly controlled but with sparks of wild energy shooting out. Through him Allouria and the ships above it became a living—moving—image.

Ten vessels. Two small but highly maneuverable Striders wove through silver-white energy bolts that arced from the larger starships.

The largest of the three Striders maneuvering against the seven identical Sharakan vessels returned fire as it laced its way through the battle, a graceful dancer with deadly intent.

“Zaen and The Heritage.”

Aleea felt rather than heard the words, knew instantly he thought of a brother. Pride and rage filled his mind. Pride in the ability and determination of one man and vessel going against seven with only two pleasure cruisers as backup. Rage that the Sharakan dared attack his home.

One bolt hit. An enemy starship lurched.

Two bolts from identical ships hit one of the pleasure cruisers. A ball of blue flame erupted. The pleasure cruiser disintegrated in a shower of red-hot debris.

Aleea gasped. It was so vivid. Real—because it was real. But there was no sound. There should have

been the crack and boom of an explosion. Screams. Not silence.

“No!” Raeder’s shout filled the jump deck. Ruthlessly he pulled energy from the five people connected to him. He forced the images of Mouria and Allouria to merge in his mind, kept the flow of information from Mylee, filtered through Pantair, playing through his mind.

One moment they were above Mouria. The next they were in the thick of the battle to save his home world.

Aleea didn’t have a chance to think. It felt as if the very essence of her being was torn from her. Linked to Raeder, she could only respond as he directed.

Four Sharakan broke off from *The Heritage* to target the planet. Three raced after Zaen’s ship. The smaller Strider turned and spun in a dizzying ballet. A bolt of energy obscured it from view.

Raeder swore with savage fluency. Ruthlessly, he absorbed the energy of the five people around him and sent *The Summit* after *The Heritage* and the Striders chasing it. He wouldn’t lose a brother.

Aleea felt the disruption in space as three other starships jumped into Allouria’s space. She recognized them from Mouria. Had they followed *The Summit*? Were they here to help? Would they be able to help? A jump left a Strider vulnerable because of what it took from the jump crew, didn’t it?

All thought disappeared as Raeder took over once more. He didn’t just move, he made tiny, incremental jumps, disappearing and reappearing, confounding the enemy. Images flashed instantly through his mind.

Aleea grasped his arms, her fingers digging into flesh but the dizziness didn’t stop.

Raeder felt the mind of his brother, Zaen, at the edges of his conscious.

“Like this.” He melded his mind with Zaen’s, felt the wrench of adding a connection to those already established with his team. Information flooded from him to Zaen allowing an instant knowledge of how to make incremental jumps and stay ahead of the enemy’s weapons.

He severed the connection just a breath after making it. With deadly precision, he made the jump away from the Strider behind Zaen and appeared between Allouria and the deadly energy bolts raining down on his home.

An energy bolt slammed into *The Summit*.

Fueled by Raeder’s rage, four energy bolts hit the Sharakan vessel in quick succession. The hull buckled. He hit it again, the energy bolt white-hot. It sliced through the enemy vessel, spilling people and equipment from the gash.

The Heritage spun on the lead Sharakan following it. It raced toward the vessel, firing bolt after bolt of energy.

The Jaedred, Myka’s ship, moved to help *The Heritage* but it was moving slow. The energy bolts it fired were sluggish though no less powerful.

The rear Sharakan turned on *The Jaedred*. It began to glow as it collected energy and began focusing it.

Raeder swore a savage stream of curses. He fought space and time, blended the images of where he was and where he wanted to be. Between one breath and the next he made the jump. The hull of *The Summit* slammed into the Sharakan battle Strider as it fired on *The Jaedred*.

Aleea was thrown into the shock webbing. Powerful hands gripped her arms. The image of the jump deck was layered with the vision of Allouria and space. Through Raeder, it filled her mind.

A blue-tinged energy bolt fired from an enemy vessel. Aleea screamed, felt Raeder's fierce, unbendable will as he forced the starship into a starboard turn away from the deadly ray.

Pure energy hit *The Summit*.

The shock webbing didn't hold. Aleea skidded across the floor of the jump deck. Her head cracked into the aqua-run.

Dizzy, disoriented, she felt hands grasp her arm, holding her as the ship listed. There was a stinging, burning sensation in her left arm. Energy was pulled from her. She was looking at the planet then facing away from it.

A bolt of energy aimed at *The Heritage* missed its mark, barely.

Aleea felt herself fading as her life's force was fed to *The Summit*. The hull was split, precious air leaking out. She could see the ship, its internal structure, the dance of atoms and electrons, the melding together of the fabric of the ship. She could feel the Strider's essence, a humming resonance that sang through her. It was alive and with the help of the jump team and herself, it was healing.

Awe changed to horror as she watched *The Heritage* take three hits. The hull blackened but held.

The Jaedred fired at the Sharakan.

Suddenly another ship swung into view. *The Kulurik*, Cynjyn's ship, slammed bolt after bolt of white-hot energy into the enemy Strider.

Raeder sent a volley of energy bolts at one Sharakan Strider. Peripherally, he was aware of *The Heritage* and *The Kulurik*. The enemy vessel between them took another series of hits. It and its two mates fired at the two Allourian ships.

Sparks flared from the enemy's hull. One moment it was there, the next, debris hit the Allourian vessels and the two remaining Sharakan ships.

The Sharakan Striders raining fire down on the planet turned as one to flee.

Raeder reined in the psychic energy of his team, felt Tayera falter and fade, her reserves depleted. He wouldn't let the Sharakan leave unscathed. Cowards, running when the odds were against them. They had attacked Allouria and for that they would die.

Meticulously, moving fast, he honed in on the last of the fleeing Striders. He timed his jump as he pulled energy in, using his ship to harness the power.

One moment he was watching them run, the next, he was behind them. The power surging and spiking through *The Summit* was tremendous. He focused on his target, concentrated the energy to the leading

edge of the ship and released it. Fury lent power to the strike.

Blinding light seared through space, hit the Sharakan and detonated the starship like a bomb. Raeder caught a glimpse of *The SunRunner* tumbling away from the blast.

The energy wave hit *The Summit*. The Strider spun out of control. Raeder was flung against the one strand of shock webbing still holding him to his chair.

* * * * *

Raeder didn't know how long it was before the wild tumble stopped. Through his connection with his ship, he viewed the skies above the planet. The enemy was gone. *How many had survived?*

He shook his head. What mattered was that Allouria and his family were safe. Their ships would need repairs. While that was happening, he and Aleea would rebuild the Rilirian Field.

Aleea? Where was she?

Shaken, he shrugged off the shock webbing that clung to his shoulders. He got to his feet. Laiera, Pantair and Kael were unconscious in their jump seats. Where was Tayera? Aleea?

Adrenaline burned through his veins. He spun around, saw Aleea slumped against the aqua-run, blood on the side of her head.

"Aleea!" He raced to Aleea and lifted her into his arms.

"Fallyn!" He yelled for the healer.

She didn't respond.

"Incom."

"Ready," the ship answered.

"Tilby. Get to my chambers immediately." He yelled the command at the ship's second healer.

He raced across the jump deck and through the translocator portal, Aleea held tight to his chest.

* * * * *

Tilby was in his chamber when they entered. She took one look at Aleea limp in Raeder's arms and hustled forward.

"What happened to the child?" she demanded, pushing Raeder's hands away even as he was laying Aleea on their bed.

"The shock webbing didn't hold. She must have hit her head when *The Summit* rolled."

Tilby tsked under her breath as she ran her hands over Aleea, concentrating on her head and left arm. She closed her eyes, let her mind connect with Aleea's and assessed for internal damage. A relieved breath escaped her when she found only minor wounds.

“You’re a lucky man.” She glared up at Raeder as she pressed one hand to Aleea’s head, the other to her arm. “She has no major injuries.”

“Why isn’t she awake?” he demanded.

Tilby glowered up at him. “You try and break your head and see how fast you want to wake up.”

“She’ll be all right?”

“No thanks to you.” She sniffed, closed her eyes and began the healing process.

Raeder felt too relieved to be angry over Tilby’s scolding. He leaned against the wall, let his head fall back and took a deep breath. He couldn’t afford to give her much recovery time. They had to get to Allouria and reenergize the Rilirian Field. The Sharakan, and whoever was behind their attacks, wouldn’t be content after losing today’s skirmish.

“You listen to me.” A solid finger thumped into his stomach.

Surprised, Raeder looked down to find Tilby glaring up at him from his waist.

She jabbed him with her finger again. “You’re not to bother this girl, do you hear? No sex no matter how much your cock kicks up a fuss about it. She’s to rest until she’s ready to wake.”

Raeder frowned. “Of course.”

Tilby snorted. “Of course,” she mimicked his affronted tone. “You just do as I say.”

Raeder’s jaw tightened. Tilby might be an old family servant, but she was about to find herself planet-side working with his mother.

“Your help is appreciated.” His tone was dismissing and he didn’t try to soften it.

“My help but not my advice.” Tilby scowled at him. “Don’t put the girl in any more danger than she’s already been in.”

“Tilby, I’m sure there are other people aboard who require your services.”

With a harrumph, she hustled out of the room.

As the door closed, Raeder eased himself onto the bed beside Aleea. He wrapped one arm around her waist, captured her legs under one of his and closed his eyes. He needed to contact his father. There would be casualties, massive destruction. He needed to get Aleea to the crystal cavern for the official consummation of their union.

How had her psychic potential been missed? The standard educational entry testing had failed to detect her ability. She should have been trained, her abilities developed. It made no sense. The tests had been created for people just like Aleea. If he hadn’t found her, her talent would have been lost.

There were a lot of questions he wanted answered. When she woke would be time enough. For now, what she needed was sleep.

He watched the rise and fall of her breasts with each breath, studied her narrow rib cage and tiny waist. Her hips were gently flared, her legs long and toned. She smelled sweet and fresh. A scent unique to her.

It was his duty to protect her, to keep her safe, for himself but even more for his people. She was the key to protecting the tract of space his family controlled.

He'd fallen short of his responsibility. She could have died using the translocator. Now she'd been hurt during a battle to save his world.

He leaned forward to rest his head against her chest. Under his cheek, her heartbeat was strong and steady.

How had she done what she'd done? The jump to Allouria had been extraordinary. The members of the jump team had been able to go into battle ready, not exhausted. It had made the difference between success and failure, and it was because of her.

He didn't have the information he needed to keep her safe. What he needed to know would be in ancient tomes, no doubt buried in archives that his father's historians would gleefully delve into.

The Sharakan attack hadn't lasted long but there would still be considerable damage.

He lay down beside Aleea, tucked her head under his chin and settled his hand over her left breast. Her heartbeat was strong. Her nipple was soft.

He lifted his head, leaned down and closed his mouth over her breast. He licked the nipple, suckled the tip with gentle pressure. Her chest lifted on a sigh, her nipple hardened in his mouth.

He nuzzled her breast with his lips. He wanted to go on tasting her but now wasn't the time.

He returned to his previous position with her head tucked under his chin. She was alive. Even in sleep she responded to him. For now, he wouldn't ask for more.

Eyes closed he held her tight, trapped under his leg. He would contact his father, but for now he needed Aleea, to feel her against him, her skin warm against his, her heart beating under his hand.

He closed his eyes and savored her.

He would do everything he needed to do, but first she needed rest and he needed her. They would see his father soon enough. And after being a part of a royal wedding, Aleea would finally understand her future was with him and tied to Allouria.

For the first time in a very long time, he was unaware when sleep overtook him.

Chapter 8

Tayera hid behind the tapestry on the wall of Raeder's room. She still couldn't believe it. What that woman Aleea had done wasn't possible. A jump was a gradual building of energy, a merging of each member of the team. It wasn't a flash of power that ended before it began.

She'd ruined everything. She was nothing. A nobody from a nothing planet. She couldn't be allowed to ruin everything.

* * * * *

Aleea blinked, opened her eyes and looked around the sleeping chamber. She could feel everything. The ship around her. The planet below *The Summit* pulled at the Strider, gravity dragging at her. She could also feel Raeder beside her, his leg over hers, his hand cupping her breast. He smelled warm and undeniably male. His skin was hot where it touched hers.

Taking a deep breath she fought to understand what was happening. The duality was more than confusing. It was like she was in her body and outside it at the same time.

And what was it with the sexual tension? It had started before the jump and built during it. If it hadn't been for the battle when they reached Allouria, she would have torn Raeder's clothes off and sank herself on his hard shaft, jump team or no jump team.

She was so ready now she wanted to scream. Her skin felt tight and she was hot, inside and out. She moaned and twisted on the bed.

Raeder woke, rose on one elbow and stared down at her. "What is it? Are you hurting?"

His hand tightened on her breast. His tone was sharp.

She grimaced. He wasn't helping her cool down. "I'm not hurting."

"What is it? I felt you tense."

She shook her head. What was she supposed to tell him? *By the way, I need you inside me right now, so get to it?*

"What is it?" he demanded. "Do I need to call Fallyn or Tilby?" He couldn't stand the thought of her hurting.

"No." She closed her eyes and shook her head again. Couldn't he just take no for an answer? "I'm not hurting. Not the way you're talking about, anyway."

Raeder's eyes narrowed on her. "In what way are you hurting?"

She opened her eyes and met his intense stare. "I want you."

He took a deep breath and almost smiled. That kind of hurt he could live with. Hell, he lived with it every waking moment himself. He pressed her into the bed with his leg over hers. "I want you, too."

"But I *feel* you inside me."

He rolled over, pressed his hard cock against her pelvis. "You feel me inside you?" His brows rose.

She rolled her eyes. "Not like that."

“Then how?”

She shook her head. “I don’t know how to explain it. It’s you. I feel...” She shook her head again. How did she explain something she didn’t understand?

“You feel the blood racing through my veins. The heat I feel deep in my gut, the pressure building in my cock.”

Her eyes widened. “How do you know?”

He rocked against her pelvis. “I feel the fire in your veins. The heat in your belly. You’re wet and you want me inside you.”

“How do you know that?”

“Something happened when we made the jump.” How did he explain what he didn’t understand?

“What is it?”

He shook his head. “I don’t know. The historians will help us when we translocate to the surface.”

Her eyes closed halfway as the heat spiked inside her. She undulated against him. She really was going to scream. “What do we do about these feelings?”

“What did you want to do on the jump deck?”

“You know about that?” She pushed against his chest. “How did you know?”

“The same way you know I’m in pain right now from wanting you. Now, what was it you wanted on the jump deck?”

Stars, there was nothing like feeling exposed and vulnerable, sexy and wanted all at the same time. If her blood got any hotter she was going to go up in flames, literally.

“You were in your chair on the jump deck, reclining. You pulled me on top of you, my back to your chest and I could feel your cock hard and straining under me. I wanted to try it that way. You filling me from behind. Stars all around us.” The thought of being exposed added a certain thrill to the whole idea, but she wasn’t ready to share that.

For a moment Raeder didn’t move or respond. “Incom. Reclining chair matching the specs of the command chair on the jump deck.”

A chair lifted out of the floor. Raeder rolled away from Alea and off the bed. He pulled her up so she was sitting before walking across the room to sit down. He reclined back, watched her as he caught his penis in one hand and held it away from his body. It was her turn to take him. He needed to know how much she wanted him.

“What next?”

She stared at the dark, turgid length and swallowed hard. She got off the bed and walked to him, unaware of the sensual sway of her hips and breasts.

Reverently she reached out and touched the head of his cock where a bead of pearly liquid had appeared. She rubbed her fingertip around the broad head, playing with him. She lifted her finger to her mouth and sucked it as she lifted her eyes to meet his.

“You taste like you smell. Musky, salty, male.”

More fluid seeped from the head of his cock.

“This was your idea. Do what you were talking about or I’ll take you where you stand.” He couldn’t play games. He was hurting too much.

She smiled, her expression full of lust. “Promises, promises.” She turned her back to him and stuck out her butt. Hands braced on the chair between his legs, she swung one leg over his.

“You’ll have to guide the monster into me. I can’t see to do it.”

“Monster?” His brows rose. He liked the sound of that.

“What else would you call something the size of your cock? I thought you were going to split me in half the first time you shoved it into me. It was like being branded with heat, impaled on steel.”

Raeder rubbed the head of his penis against her pussy. With his other hand he grabbed her hips and guided her back until the head of his penis was snug against her opening.

“Branded by heat?” He pushed against her, grimaced as the tight muscles of her vaginal opening resisted the pressure, groaned as the broad head of his cock popped through. “You brand me. Every time your channel wraps around me, it is hot and wet, ready for me.”

He grasped her hips with both hands and pulled her down on him with a powerful movement that impaled her in one continuous motion.

She groaned as his cock rubbed the back of her vagina and found a spot deep inside her that sent sensation rocketing through her. She tried to lift up but he wouldn’t let her.

“I like that you think my cock is a monster.” He pulled her back against him until she was lying flush against his chest, her legs splayed on either side of him. “You must like the thought of my monster as well.”

She shivered and her stomach quivered. “I love the thought of your monster. I love the thought of it inside me. I love the thought of it pounding into me. I love the thought of lying in bed after you’ve fucked me and having it still inside me.”

“Do you love the thought of seeing it inside you?”

She shifted as if to turn but he stopped her. “What do you mean?”

“Incom. Reflection.”

The wall in front of them turned to reflective glass. She found herself staring at herself and Raeder. His shoulders were broad and dark under her. His eyes heavy lidded, his face flushed. Her face was flushed

as well but still looked pale compared to his darker skin.

“Look down.”

She did. Hot color flushed her face and chest. Her nipples were tight red crowns cresting her breasts and he hadn't even sucked on them.

Her response heightened his own. “Look lower.”

She did, shivered as he pressed his hand over her pelvis. It spread from hipbone to hipbone, dark against her paleness, his little finger toying with her curls.

“Look at my cock in your channel.” His voice was low and growling.

Her chest rose and fell with each harsh breath. She looked down and her stomach tightened. Her vagina clenched around him. He was buried in her. She couldn't tell where he ended and she began.

“Can you feel me inside you?”

“Yes.”

“Explain to me what I feel like.”

Her hips jerked. He always wanted to hear what she was feeling. Something about that made her hotter, her stomach all quivery.

He pressed harder against her pelvis, holding her still.

“Tell me.”

She swallowed, met his eyes in the glass. She wanted him to move. She didn't want to talk. Her experience was too personal to share.

“Look at where we're joined. Think about my penis stuffed inside you. What does it feel like? I want to know what it is you feel.”

“What I feel?” Her voice was faint as she repeated his words. “I feel you. You're hot, filling me tight.” How did he expect her to be able to think when he was inside her, filling her so full she could barely breathe?

“Not good enough. What is it you feel?”

She stared at her thighs spread wide and his flesh where it disappeared inside her. “I feel your pulse beating in me,” she whispered. Talking about it stripped her, exposed her to him in ways she'd never been before. It was thrilling and terrifying all at once. “It's as if you were moving even though you aren't.”

“I can feel the pulse of you, too. What else?”

“Heat. So hot. It's like you're burning me from the inside.” She writhed against him, her eyes half-closed.

“You’re like a hot fist around me. Squeezing me. What else?” He rubbed her pelvis, somehow increasing the tight, hot sensation inside her. Her words aroused him even more.

She closed her eyes and moved her hips in a slight rocking motion. He let her do it. Her breath caught. “When I move, I feel you inside me even more. It’s a dragging, heavy sensation. It’s a friction, a burning but different than heat.”

“When we were on the jump deck, what else did you want me to do? How did you want me to touch you?”

She moaned low in her throat. “I thought, sitting like this, you could hold my breasts, play with my nipples.”

His hands slid up her sides to cup her breasts. She was soft and round and fit his hands perfectly.

She took a deep breath, anticipation making her clamp even tighter around his hard shaft in her.

“What is it?”

“You. When you squeeze my breasts and pull at my nipples, I feel it in my womb. It makes me hotter, wetter.”

“Do you know what it feels like for me when I’m inside you?” He’d never wanted to share his experience with anyone before but he wanted to share with her.

“No.” Her voice was a moan as he plucked and pinched her nipples.

“You’re creamy, so wet you make it easy to slide in your heat even while it’s hard because you’re so tight. Whether you slide up and down on my cock or I’m pounding in and out of you, it doesn’t matter. Your tight flesh works the head of my cock until I’m ready to explode. Like I am right now.”

She felt him grow inside her as he spoke. His voice a low, dark seduction.

“Where else did you want me to touch you?” His voice was low, almost guttural.

“My clit. I wanted to feel you rub and pluck my clit while you pulsed inside me.” Saying it made her hotter.

One hand stroked down the center of her body to cup her mound.

His hand outside, his penis inside, she felt surrounded.

“What does it feel like when I come in you?” Did she like the feel of his cum jetting inside her?

She jerked again. His words, her words, they made her melt. Her voice was breathless when she answered. “It feels hot and thick, a bit...sticky. Then it leaks out of me, sticks to my thighs and the scent makes me ready all over again. Pure sex.”

His fingers dipped between her legs. He stroked her clit with one fingertip, the touch light and teasing.

“Touch me harder,” she begged.

He continued to stroke with the light, feathery touch. “You’re fond of the word hard, aren’t you?”

“Raeder, you’re teasing me.”

“No. I’m teasing both of us.”

“Touch me harder.”

He lowered his other hand to her pussy lips and spread them. The sight of her jewel made need slam into his gut.

Her clit was a visible nub of flesh, aching. She hadn’t realized how erotic it was to watch them having sex.

“What does it feel like when I touch you?” With his free hand, he circled the tiny protrusion, flicked and rubbed it. He wanted to know her every experience, to be able to make it better each time.

She moaned. “I don’t know how to explain it.”

He pinched the sensitive flesh.

She bucked and cried out. “It’s so much pleasure, it’s almost pain. Every inch of my skin is alive. It’s so much. Too much.”

“Never too much.”

He pressed hard against her clit. His penis grew inside her and they both exploded.

She shuddered with release as his hot semen jetted inside her. Her head lolled to one side as the deep inner clenching eased.

Raeder rubbed her pelvis with one hand as he stroked her pussy with the other. “If I could live with my cock inside you forever it wouldn’t be long enough.”

* * * * *

Behind the tapestry, tears streamed down Tayera’s face. She was wet, her own orgasm just subsiding. Aleea was stealing what was hers. Raeder’s semen should be filling her not some slut from Centera. He was hers. He had always been hers until Aleea had appeared.

* * * * *

Raeder lifted Aleea off him and into his arms as he strode back toward the bed.

“I want you to rest while I contact my father. I want to know what we’re facing before we go to the surface.”

She didn’t argue as he settled her on the bed. Her thighs were wet with his semen but she didn’t say anything to him. She wanted to feel him on her, to have the smell of him a part of her.

“You’re to stay in bed, Aleea.”

“Yes, Raeder.”

He leaned down and kissed her firmly on the mouth. “I mean it.”

She grabbed him by the hair and held him as she pressed her lips to his and thrust her tongue into his mouth. She fell back against the bed, turned on her side and closed her eyes.

He pulled the cover over her and pressed a kiss to her forehead. “I’ll be in the next room. If you need anything call out. I’ll hear you.”

“I’ve never had anyone worry about me before. It’s nice.” Her tone was a low murmur as she let sleep roll her under its dark waves.

“I’m afraid that worrying about you could become a habit.”

She wrinkled her nose and shook her head. “There’s no need to worry about me. As soon as things are settled on Allouria, I’ll go home. There’s nowhere in all of reality safer than Centera.”

Raeder’s lips thinned. His hand stroking her hair stilled. He wasn’t going to argue with her. She was still weak from the jump and the battle, and he had exhausted her further with sex. The next light cycle, after they translocated planet-side, he would explain to her just what it meant to be the genetic mate of a Darkeen male. She would never be free of him. The sooner she accepted that the more content she would be.

He watched until she slept before going into a room off of the sleeping chamber. He was close enough to hear her if she needed him. He wouldn’t leave her unattended. Not until he was sure she was safe.

“Incom. Open communication with King Rieve.”

There was a momentary pause before his father’s image appeared in holo-image before him.

“Father.” A familiar sense of homecoming filled him as he saw his father’s image. He acknowledged the older man with a slight inclination of his head.

“Raeder. I heard you found your genetic mate. Is it true?”

Raeder nodded. “At the Illusions outpost on Centera.”

“I’ll want to hear more when you arrive planet-side.”

His father looked and sounded tired, something he’d never known to happen before. Things on Allouria had to be bad. “How much damage did the Sharakan do?”

His father’s craggy features hardened. “Too much. Mearyn, the palace and city, are gone.”

Bands of anger tightened around Raeder’s chest. He refused to acknowledge the dread that knotted his gut. “Casualties?”

Rieve’s features hardened even more. “In the tens of thousands. The Rilirian Field is close to total

collapse. The joining ceremony and the consummation will be set for the day after tomorrow. This won't happen again."

Raeder felt a cold wind touch his soul. Rieve never gave anything away to anyone, not even his sons. The situation on Allouria was more serious than he had realized.

"When Aleea is rested, we'll translocate to the surface."

"Rested?"

Raeder nodded, his expression grim. "She was connected to me during the jump and the battle."

"What!"

He ignored his father's outrage. He hadn't known what was going to happen and he wouldn't have changed it if he had. Her presence had made the difference between success and total failure. "That's one of the things I need the historians to look for. The bond between Aleea and me is more than I expected. She is a part of me all the time. I can feel her right now, sleeping."

Rieve nodded. "We'll have answers before the joining ceremony." His image disappeared.

* * * * *

Tayera listened as the communication between Raeder and his father ended. Careful to make no noise, she hurried to the door, scurrying out of the room when it opened.

She had plans to make. Raeder was determined Aleea would make it to his home alive. He was probably right. But the surprise would be on him after they reached Allouria.

Smiling, she hurried down the corridor. No one would be able to save the Centeran slut. Raeder would lose the woman he wanted as she had lost Raeder, the man meant for her.

And he would lose more than that. Before everything was done, the house of Darkeen would fall and she would be a part of making it happen.

She walked through the translocator portal to the jump deck.

"Incom, locate Fallyn." There was one person she could count on to be an ally. Her own sister would turn against her for Raeder, but not Fallyn.

"I'm here."

Tayera jumped at the sound of Fallyn's voice. Spinning around, she faced the aqua-run. "We've got to do something about Aleea. Raeder..."

Fallyn, her fin crest lying flat, floated away from the wall Tayera stood next to. "Something's already been done."

Hours later, Raeder stepped through the translocator portal onto Allouria and stopped. His heart slammed into his chest. Mearyn was gone. The ivory city lay in ruins before him. Marble columns that had stood for five thousand years were reduced to black singed pebbles.

Aleea stepped through the portal and bumped into him. Was she doomed to never be graceful around the man?

He reached back, held her in place when she would have stepped around him. He didn't want her to see Mearyn as it was now. He'd wanted her to see his home, to know it as he knew it and now it was gone. It felt like someone had ripped his guts out.

Mearyn Palace. He and his brothers had snuck their Wyvyrn mounts into the ballroom and raced around the huge room.

A slight smile tilted his lips at the memory even as his eyes scanned the ruins. His mother had been so angry. She'd never yelled at any of them. She hadn't had to. The look on her face when she'd seen what they'd done had been enough.

His chest tightened. Where was his mother? His father?

He released Aleea and stepped forward. Where should he look? *The Summit* could scan the surface. If there were survivors in the ruins, they had to be found fast.

How many people he'd known all his life had died? The tanner in the old stable below the crystal fountain fashioned as a Wyvyrn sire, mother and foal, was he still alive?

Aleea looked around Raeder. Her mouth dropped open but no sound emerged. It was the holo-vision Raeder had shown her of Callen Minor come to life. Black starbursts around blast craters.

Her stomach rolled. Her knees went weak and she sank to the ground. Innocent lives destroyed. A city gone. If it weren't for Raeder, his brothers and cousin, the whole planet would be a wasteland. Who would do such a thing?

"Raeder. You could have arrived sooner." A huge man, his features built along heroic lines, stalked up to the small party from *The Summit*. His expression was grim.

Kael, Pantair and Laiera bowed. Raeder inclined his head.

Unsure who it was everyone was showing such respect to, Aleea sat unmoving.

"You have the thanks of your father and your king for arriving when you did." The man's voice was as big as his body, booming in the silence that surrounded them.

Raeder shook his head. He looked around the ruins and his stomach rolled. "Any thanks belong to Zaen and the crew of *The Heritage*. If he hadn't slowed the Sharakan, Mearyn wouldn't be our only casualty."

"Zaen has earned the gratitude of Allouria and her king as well."

Piercing dark eyes turned on Aleea.

She shivered as the nearly black gaze swept over her. She'd never been so thoroughly weighed and measured. Hopefully it would never happen again.

He looked at Raeder, jerked his chin toward Aleea. "The genetic match?"

"The genetic match?" She glared up at the huge man. "I'm a lot more than a genetic match. I'm a person, an individual and deserve to be recognized as such." She raised her chin. Stars, she wished she were standing instead of perched on the ground like a boneless weakling.

The big man's brows rose but he didn't look at her. He pinned Raeder with his steely gaze. "She's got quite a mouth for someone who can't even stand on her own two feet."

Aleea's jaw tightened and her eyes narrowed. She'd show the big nanthal her mouth. She'd clamp her teeth on something that would get his attention and see how he dealt with it.

Awkwardly, she clambered to her feet. She swore under her breath as her legs almost gave way again. Her muscles didn't want to work.

"You—"

Raeder's arm wrapped around her waist. He pulled her to his side, squeezed with enough force to steal her breath. This was not the meeting he had envisioned.

"Aleea. I'd like you to meet my father. King Rieve."

Aleea felt her stomach drop. She'd been thinking about sinking her teeth into the king's—

Stars. How did she get herself into situations like this? It wasn't like she could just close her eyes and it would all disappear. No, she was stuck right where she was.

"Your Majesty." She bobbed her head, not sure what else to do. As weak as her legs felt if she tried to bow or, Stars forbid, curtsy, she'd land on her nose. Which would probably be a fitting end to the whole fiasco.

"Aleea NaDeera." The deep, booming voice vibrated through her. "Allouria welcomes you." His dark eyes stared into hers for a long moment before he turned to Raeder once more.

Aleea breathed a sigh of relief. The man could make a person more uncomfortable with a look than other people could with scathing words. And he'd said Allouria welcomed her. What about him?

"How many Sharakan got away?"

Lips thin, the muscles in his jaw jumping, Raeder shook his head. "Five were fleeing. One of them was destroyed. I don't know about the other four."

The king made a low, growling sound. Eyes glacial, he looked over the ruins of the once great city. "We have to know who is behind the attacks." The words were spoken low, more to himself than anyone else. His eyes never left the people emerging from portals around the ruins to search the rubble.

Abruptly, Rieve turned back to Raeder. "Take Aleea to Fauvin Palace. Your mother and I will meet you

there tomorrow. She won't leave until she knows there are no survivors in the ruins."

"We could help," Aleea blurted. If there were survivors trapped in the rubble, she wanted to help find them.

Raeder hugged her close to his side. "Your life is too important to risk. We'll be at the palace waiting." He turned Aleea and walked with her back through the portal.

Black spots swam before Aleea's eyes as they stepped through the portal. She covered her face with one hand. Why was it trembling? Her legs felt like they were going to collapse again. Whatever was going on, she was keeping it to herself. Raeder already had to think she was the most fragile person alive. She'd collapsed after the jump and battle, cracked her head open.

Which was probably what was wrong now. A reaction to everything that had happened plus translocating twice in a row. If she got a little rest, she'd be fine.

"What is it?" Raeder's tone was sharp. His arm around her waist tightened.

Aleea lowered her hand, blinked as the black spots danced before her eyes. "Nothing rest and being stationary won't cure."

Raeder swung her up in his arms.

She gasped and wrapped her arms around his neck. "What are you doing?"

"Carrying my bride to our bedchambers. I don't want you too exhausted to take me. I need to feel your heat clamped around me." He growled the words against her throat.

Aleea laughed. "That sounds wonderful." She snuggled her face into the crook of his throat. If anything would help take away her shakes, it would be making love with him.

Raeder held her tight in his arms. He strode up the black-veined, green marble stairs and through the entrance hall of the palace. He turned down a long corridor to the left and walked into the second of two doors on the right.

He ignored all the furnishings and amenities and walked to the bed. He laid Aleea on it and stripped them both.

With single-minded intent, he kissed her. Devoured her mouth, stroked into it with his tongue.

She moaned, writhed where she lay but couldn't lift a hand to help him. She was weak, unable to move. No doubt a reaction to him.

His tongue in her mouth was stroking, probing, rough and tender all at once. He moved to her neck, his lips warm, his tongue wet, and his teeth sharp.

She loved all the textures, the biting, licking, sucking. If she could feel him on, around and in her for the rest of her life she would be happy.

He moved down, licking his way across her chest, sipping at the swell of one breast before moving to the other. He nibbled around the nipple, concentrating on the aureole. Everything about her fascinated

him.

She moaned, tried to lift into his caress but couldn't. There was nothing she could do but lie still and feel what he did to her. She wanted his mouth on her nipple, wanted to feel him pull it deep into his mouth, press it hard against the roof of his mouth until it was so much pleasure it bordered on pain.

“Raeder, taste my nipples. Make me burn.”

He did as she asked, took her nipple into his mouth and drew it deep with hard suction, pressed it against the roof of his mouth. It was tight, pinching, hurting, so much pleasure she was ready to explode.

Before the waves of pleasure could envelop her, he moved to her other nipple. Treated it to the same soul-shattering loving.

She wasn't sure how he got between her legs but he was suddenly there.

He licked her nether lips, nuzzled and sipped at them. Pushed his tongue into her vagina, groaned when she gasped. He sucked on her clit and the world exploded.

Waves of pleasure washed over her. Her inner muscles clenched tight. She was empty and hurting. There was nothing she could do. Her legs lay unmoving as her insides tightened, clenching, fighting for release.

Yet he didn't allow it. She wanted to scream at him, to be strong enough to roll him on his back and straddle him. She would take his thick, hard length in her hands and ease herself down on him, feeding his turgid length into her channel one slow inch at a time.

He sucked, not letting up the pressure until she was whimpering, tears streaming from her eyes as her head thrashed back and forth, the only part of her she could move.

Just as white heat enveloped her, his mouth was gone, her clit throbbing, aching for the pressure of his mouth that would shatter and rebuild her in orgasmic fire.

He grasped his cock, rubbed the head damp with pre-cum along her wet folds. He parted her with his fingers, pushed the head of his penis snug against her entrance. He was hot, and hard, fire burning against her wet heat.

“Oh yes. Push it into me. You're perfect, Raeder. Perfect for me. Filling me so tight. Making me burn until you make me shatter.” She wanted him inside her. She wasn't complete without him.

He forged into her, fast and hard, his great length and girth stretching her inside where she was the most vulnerable and the most receptive.

She cried out. Unable to move, she lay under him, a willing receptacle as he cleaved through her clinging heat, thrusting into her. The slide of his flesh in her was a hot, rough hammering of flesh in flesh.

Her vagina clenched, trying desperately to hold him. She breathed deep of the smell of their sex, the combined scents making her ache for more. Her mouth watered. She could feel him in her mouth even as he slammed into her. The pleasure-pain sending her closer and closer to the edge she had walked so many times before with him.

He pulled free, flipped her onto her stomach and thrust home once more.

She cried out as he filled her full, the head of his penis hitting deep inside each time, making her hurt in the most excruciatingly pleasurable way.

Her nipples rubbed against the bedding as he slammed into her from above and behind. She couldn't stop the motion, could only gasp as each thrust pushed her into the bed, rubbed her nipples as he stretched her beyond bearing.

Orgasm racked her. She screamed her release.

"Come in me!" she begged. "I want to feel your seed, hot and thick, filling me. I want to feel everything there is of you."

His cock grew thicker, longer, harder, and hotter.

She cried out at the friction on already well-worked flesh.

He yelled as his semen pumped from him. Each thrust into her emptied his seed into her vault. She felt the hot fluid fill her and the inner spasms began again. Clenching, releasing. Everything for him. All of him in her.

He collapsed on top of her, his heart thundering against her back, his seed seeping out to wet her thighs.

She couldn't breathe but didn't want him to move. She loved the feel of him crushing her into the bed, the feel of his chest moving with each breath, the throb of his heart. If she could lie like this forever, keep him inside her, she would be content.

He pulled his cock free.

"No." She murmured the protest unable to put more emphasis on it than that. His flesh, heavy and semi-flaccid, pulled from her making her groan as her vagina gave up its treasure unwillingly.

He rolled off of her, kissed her forehead and got out of bed.

"Where are you going?" She turned her head to watch him. Stars, she didn't even have the energy to roll over on her side toward him.

He walked through a sonishower, faced her as he dressed. "There is work to be done here while my mother and father are busy at Mearyn. Rest. I'll be back soon."

She wanted to protest as he strode from the room but didn't have the energy for that. Slow tears leaked from her eyes as she watched the door close behind him. Why was she so weak now? The trip to Allouria was over. She'd survived almost freezing, the first jump of her life, cracking her head during the first battle she'd ever experienced. People had lost their lives and all she could do was lie here and feel sorry for herself. She had everything she'd ever dreamed of and never thought to have. She had Raeder. What more could she ask of life?

It was just the jump and the battle. They had exhausted her. She'd feel better after she slept. Maybe then she could help with the survivors. Once the disaster was dealt with things would be better.

She couldn't stop the tears from flowing. Her chest was tight and it was hard to breathe. What she needed to do was sleep. The hopeless, helpless feeling that weighted her stomach would leave when she wasn't so tired.

She closed her eyes and lay boneless on the bed where Raeder had left her. Everything would be better when she woke. She would prove to herself and to Raeder that she was worthy to be his bride, not a weak woman in constant danger of losing her life.

When she woke up, everything would be better.

* * * * *

Raeder strode from the bedchamber and Aleea. In his father's communications room, he opened a link with his father. His mother appeared with his father in holo-image before him. As beautiful as ever, she looked more than tired. Her eyes were dull and dark-rimmed. She'd been crying, the evidence plain in the tracks running through the dirt that smudged her cheeks.

"What are you finding?"

He watched his father put his arm around his mother. He would face the future in the same way he had grown up seeing them face it, with his wife at his side. He hadn't realized how important that was to him until now.

"No survivors." Rieve's face was cold, Ellowin's sad.

"None?" Raeder's hands fisted. He had to fight to keep from striking out. He would not show such a sign of weakness.

"None." Ellowin's voice was soft, husky and resonant from a throat roughened by tears. "No men, women or children." Her voice broke on the last.

Raeder closed his eyes for a moment; the image of the tiny pink shoe from Callen Minor filled his mind. Beside it was the image of a tiny, dark-haired boy who had been the light in his grandfather's heart, the pride he had shared with the royal family. Gone.

He looked up. "When can Aleea and I be joined?"

His mother took a deep breath, visibly drawing herself in. "Tomorrow. We had all the arrangements made before the Sharakan attacked."

"Tomorrow." He felt a lightening inside that was completely unexpected. Aleea would be his the next light cycle. His and his alone. She would never again speak of leaving him. "I'll see that a relief center is set up for those who lost their homes and loved ones today."

"Raeder, rest tonight. Alaric is seeing to the relief center." Ellowin reached out as if to touch him. "Your joining will happen tomorrow. There will be enough time after that to take care of anything that needs to be done."

Raeder opened his mouth, thought better of what he was about to say and closed it. Ellowin was right. He needed to sleep. The battle had drained him. "I'll see you both tomorrow."

“And be sure it’s sleeping you do.” Rieve’s voice boomed through the room. “Your bride needs to be well-rested when you take her to the crystal cavern to consummate your union.”

Ellowin elbowed Rieve.

Raeder smiled as the holo-image of his parents disappeared. His mother trying to curb his irrepressible father. Some things were meant to be—his mother and father, although not a genetic match. Just like him and Aleea were meant to be.

Unbowed by the exhaustion that plagued him, he stood up and rubbed a hand over his face. Rieve had nothing to worry about. The only thing he and Aleea would do this night was sleep. Neither of them had the energy for anything more.

He walked out of the communications room and strode through the palace back to his bedchamber. He wanted to be beside Aleea. He needed her in his arms. She’d been as receptive as ever to his loving her but she hadn’t been as responsive. Something wasn’t right but they would deal with it after they were both rested. And resting would probably cure the problem anyway.

He walked into his chambers, saw Aleea lying as he’d left her and frowned. She was more tired than he had thought. He hadn’t taken care of her as he should have. That was something he had to change.

Shedding his clothes, he lay down beside her. He rolled her to her side, cupped her breast with one hand, laid his leg over both of hers and tucked her head under his chin.

He closed his eyes and took a deep breath. Now he could sleep.

* * * * *

While Raeder talked to his parents, Aleea tried to sleep. She couldn’t keep her eyes open but her mind wouldn’t stop running. And it was running in circles that were going to drive her crazy. She wanted Raeder, had thought helping him was a temporary thing. But it wasn’t. He was going to marry her. But was she going to marry him?

Stars, how had life gotten so complicated? She went to Illusions for a fantasy and ended up with a Darkeen prince who wasn’t going to take no for an answer. Not that she wanted to say no. She wanted to stay with him forever.

And she would.

A frown wrinkled her brow. She would? When had she decided that?

“About the same time you decided to come to Allouria with him to save his people.” She winced at the bite in her own voice. Ouch. She’d been hiding from herself the whole time. She’d been kidding herself thinking she could ever leave him. He’d have to send her away and she’d probably come back and haunt him if he did. She wasn’t going to give up what was hers and Raeder was hers.

“He’ll never be yours.”

Her insides jumped at the sound of the voice coming from the foot of the bed. “Laiera?”

“Close.”

“Tayera?”

“Now that was a stretch, wasn’t it? If not Laiera, it has to be Tayera. What does Raeder see in you?”

Aleea shivered. There was something not right about Tayera’s voice beyond the open derision. Something in the other woman’s tone made her skin crawl.

“Were you looking for Raeder?”

“Why would I look for Raeder when I wanted to find you alone?”

The soft, almost singsong voice made Aleea shiver. Alone was definitely not something she wanted to be with Tayera.

She tried to push up from the bed. Her arms wouldn’t move. She tried to move her legs. They wouldn’t move. It was getting harder to breathe.

“Having trouble, Centeran whore?”

“What’s your problem, Tayera? I’ve never done anything to you.” She couldn’t move but there was nothing wrong with her mouth.

“You exist. That’s a problem.”

Aleea seethed inside. “You’re the one with the problem. Incom. Raeder, I need you in your bedchamber.”

Harsh laughter broke out from the foot of the bed grating already stretched nerves.

“You’re not on *The Summit*, slut. Fauvin Palace doesn’t come with the same communication system the Strider does. There’s no one to save you now, is there?”

“Why would I need to be saved from you?”

Tayera strolled around the end of the bed and into view. Her dark eyes shone bright. Red flags marked her cheeks and her lips were too red.

“Tayera, did you...take something?”

“Only your life.” She laughed again, the harsh grating sound of before.

“You’re not making any sense. I’m still alive.”

Tayera reached out and brushed Aleea’s hair away from her face.

Aleea wanted to jerk her head away or slap the offensive hand but she couldn’t move. Everything was frozen. Her breath was nothing more than gasping as she fought to take in air. Had Tayera taken something, somehow given her something? “What have you done?”

“Me?” Tayera’s voice was too sweet. “I didn’t do anything. I just explained to Fallyn what needed to be

done. And I came to make sure it was done right.”

“What...what was done right?”

Tayera smiled as Aleea’s eyes closed and her breathing slowed. Each breath went from gasping to shallow. She stroked Aleea’s hair back from her face before twisting her fingers in the length. She leaned over her, spoke into her ear.

“I’ll let Fallyn know you’ve enjoyed the benefits of her care. And as you fight for your last breath, think of me.

Aleea shuddered deep inside, fought to open her eyes, to breathe.

Tayera disappeared.

Raeder lay down beside her, held her close and went to sleep unaware she was dying in his arms.

Chapter 10

Sunlight refracted through the giant crystal set in the center of the sleep chamber’s ceiling woke Raeder. For a long moment he lay unmoving. Aleea was in his arms and for the moment Allouria was safe. By the end of the day he would be able to relax his guard as he hadn’t been able to for longer than he cared to think about.

First, though, he had to get Aleea through the joining ceremony. Consummating their union in the crystal cavern wouldn’t be the problem.

He cupped her breast in his hand, weighed it and stroked the velvety tip. It didn’t respond.

Frowning, he pushed up on one elbow. He released her breast, pushed her hair away from her face.

His heart kicked hard against his ribs. She was pale, almost white. Even her lips were colorless.

“Aleea?”

She didn’t respond.

His chest tightened around his thundering heart. The jump followed by battle had been exhausting. It had taken more from Aleea than he’d realized.

“Aleea. Baby, wake up. You have a joining ceremony you have to participate in.” He stroked her face, brushed his thumb over her lips. She was cold to his touch.

His heart slammed into the wall of his chest again. He pressed his ear over her heart, closed his eyes and concentrated. It was a long moment before he felt her chest move. It barely rose.

He lifted his head and pressed two fingers to the side of her throat. Her heartbeat was a faint, wild flutter against his fingertips.

Swearing, he rolled away from her, off the bed and to his feet. In two strides he was across the room. He activated the inter-palace communication system.

“Medlab. This is Raeder. You’re needed in my chambers immediately.”

No one answered.

He slammed his hand against the wall. “Medlab. This is Raeder. Report to my chambers immediately.”

No response.

“*Effing hell.*” He spit the words as he turned back to the bed. Aleea hadn’t moved, she lay just as he’d left her. All the healers would be at Mearyn and he needed one now. The closest one was aboard *The Summit*. He had to get Aleea there.

He pulled on pants and boots, wrapped a light sheet around Aleea and lifted her into his arms. “Blast you, Aleea. You’re not going to get away from me. You’re not.”

He crushed her to his chest as he raced down the corridor to the translocator. He activated the holo-controls, stepped through the portal and onto his ship.

“Incom,” he shouted to the intra-Strider communication system. “Fallyn. Meet me in the Medlab.”

He activated the translocator again and stepped from the deck he’d arrived on to the Medlab. Carefully he laid Aleea on a narrow bed.

“Fallyn.” He turned to the aqua-run. Fallyn wasn’t there.

“Incom. Fallyn! Where are you? Get to the Medlab.”

There was no response.

“Incom. Track location of Fallyn.”

“Fallyn is currently on the jump deck.”

“Fallyn. I need you in the Medlab.”

Again, there was no response.

He pressed his hand to Aleea’s chest. It didn’t move. It felt like someone was squeezing his heart. He was losing her.

“Incom. Tilby. Get to the Medlab immediately.”

“Hello and please to you, too.”

He slowly unfisted his hands. “Just get here Tilby. There isn’t time for your sarcasm. Aleea’s dying.”

“Again?” Her tone was incredulous.

Teeth clenched, he slammed his fist into the wall. "Tilby." His voice held the promise of mayhem.

"As if breaking your hand will do the girl any good."

He glared at Tilby as she walked through the portal into the Medlab. He fought the urge to catch the old woman and shake her. "Help Aleea. I'm going to find Fallyn."

Tilby ignored him as she caught sight of Aleea. Her features pinched into a mass of worry lines. "Find Fallyn. This is going to take the two of us." There was no touch of censure in her voice.

He couldn't lose her. "Keep her alive. I'll get Fallyn."

Hands pressed to Aleea's chest, eyes closed, Tilby ignored him.

He activated the translocator and stepped through onto the jump deck. The outer hull was clear, the jump deck lit by the first golden rays of sun glowing around the eastern curve of the planet.

Eyes narrowed, he turned to the aqua-run

Fallyn lay unmoving, her sightless eyes staring at Allouria. The bright fingers of light reached out to wrap around the planet, found nothing in her eyes to reflect.

Raeder ran to the aqua-run. "Fallyn."

She didn't respond.

"Fallyn! Answer me." He pushed his hands against the wall until they sank in, kept pushing until his arms were through as well. He grabbed Fallyn's arms and pulled her toward him. Slowly, he eased her through the wall, out of her world of water and into the insubstantial atmosphere of air.

He went to his knees, Fallyn limp and draped in his arms.

"What happened, Fallyn?" He opened his mind, touched hers. What had happened to her? Who had done this?

Huge black eyes, once clear and bright, were cloudy and dull.

"Fallyn. What happened?" He tried to keep his tone gentle but it emerged harsh.

She looked beyond him at the glowing planet on the view-screen. "Do you know..." her resonant voice sounded hollow, faded into nothing. Her head fin lay flat and colorless against her skull. How did she explain her love for a man she could never have, the desperation to keep what she could of him?

"Do I know what, Fallyn?" He had to have answers. What had happened to her? Was it the same thing that was wrong with Aleea?

"Do you know what it is to live in a cage?" Her words were broken and ragged as she fought for breath.

He frowned. "What are you talking about? The aqua-run?"

Her mouth opened and closed. No sound emerged.

“What is it, Fallyn? What are you telling me?”

She gulped at the air, making a gasping sound.

He had to lean close to hear her nearly soundless voice. “Who did this to you?”

“She stole the only part of you that was mine. She can walk with you. Love you. Link with you.” Her voice faded away.

Jaw clenched, Raeder stared at Fallyn. Whatever was wrong with Aleea, Fallyn had done it. He had trusted her, called her friend. She hadn’t only betrayed him, she had betrayed Allouria and all of the Allourian alliance. “What did you do? What did you do?!”

Fast, shallow breaths raised her chest in an uneven rhythm. Her eyes opened wide. She sucked in a deep breath. All movement stilled.

“Fallyn! Blasted hell! What did you do?” He yelled at her, wanted to shake her. *What had she done?*

She didn’t answer. She was limp, lifeless in his arms.

Jaw tight, he laid her on the floor. There was no remorse in him that she was dead. If she hadn’t died, he would have killed her himself.

Her fisted hand lay on his foot, white against the black of his boots. She was gone. What she had done and why she’d done it were gone with her. If Aleea died, Allouria died with her. Without the Rilirian Field, another Sharakan attack would decimate the planet. They didn’t have the Striders to fight and survive.

He stood up and turned away.

Fallyn’s clenched hand fell to the floor. Her fingers uncurled and a gray-green vial fell and rolled across the floor.

The clink of glass caught Raeder’s attention. He turned, bent and picked up the tiny container. It wasn’t pretty, could be nothing. Or it could be everything. Poison or cure, it wouldn’t matter. If it was either one, Tilby could use it to save Aleea.

He looked at Fallyn, motionless on the floor. Even if the vial saved Aleea’s life, he would never forgive the Merwoman for what she’d done.

Turning, he strode away. The only thing he was going to worry about was Aleea. She was all that mattered.

* * * * *

He ran into the Medlab and to Aleea’s side. Tilby had one hand pressed to Aleea’s chest, the other over her forehead.

“Check this. It may tell you what’s wrong.” He held the vial out to Tilby.

Tilby opened her eyes which widened when she saw the vial. “Fallyn?”

Raeder’s jaw tightened. Tilby loved Fallyn like a daughter. There was no way to soften the blows that were coming. “She’s dead, Tilby. I believe she poisoned Aleea. Check the vial.”

“She was a healer.” Her voice was thick with disbelief.

There was no time to try and comfort her. She had to focus on Aleea. “What do I do to keep Aleea alive while you check this?”

Tilby’s lips trembled. She pressed them together, looked up and met Raeder’s gaze. “Put one hand over her forehead, the other over her heart like I have mine.”

Her hands trembled as she lifted them away from Aleea and took the vial.

Raeder put his hands where hers had been.

“Concentrate on her. Focus on her. Send your energy to her. What you do with the jump team, reverse it.”

Tilby’s hands, small, dry and wrinkled, settled over his. He felt her mind touch his, fought the urge to pull away. He touched others, they never touched him.

She pinched his hand hard. “Focus.” Her tone was piercing. “This isn’t about you. This is about Aleea.”

Nostrils flared, jaw tight, Raeder closed his eyes and reached out with his mind.

Tilby’s mind brushed his. “Follow me.”

He wasn’t sure if she spoke aloud or in his mind. He felt the tug as she pulled him with her, sank into the black stillness of Aleea’s mind. They went deeper and deeper. There was nothing, not even a glimmer of thought.

Tilby sank deeper still. He wanted to move faster but didn’t. Tilby knew what she was doing. In this, he had to follow.

Tilby led him to Aleea, to the very depths of her soul. The faintest glimmer, a mere ember was all that kept her with him. A wrong breath would extinguish her life.

“Pay attention.” Tilby touched Aleea, mind to mind. Through her, Raeder felt the slow hush of power, energy being released in a slow steady trickle feeding Aleea’s dwindling life force.

“You do it.”

He gathered himself, focused and released energy.

“No!” His power slammed into Tilby’s indomitable will. “Slowly. Gently. A burst of energy like that will kill her.”

Fighting the urge to pull away, to strike out, Raeder focused once more on what he had to do. He

gathered himself, touched Aleea and with painful slowness fed energy to her starving soul.

“Just like that. Don’t stop until I tell you.”

He focused his will, concentrated solely on Aleea. He wouldn’t let his woman die. She was his to share with his people. He protected and cared for his own.

* * * * *

Tayera activated the translocator in Fauvin Palace. Raeder’s voice had been as cold as she’d ever heard it when he’d ordered the jump team aboard *The Summit*. He was going after the people who had targeted Allouria and Aleea. He would make them pay for what they had done.

She translocated to *The Summit*. What she wanted to do was laugh out loud. Instead she would have to wear her sad face. She didn’t want to give away to any of the jump team that she wasn’t as upset as they were that Aleea was dead.

Raeder would need the team more than ever when he went after the Sharakan who had destroyed Mearyn and killed Aleea. And, of course, all the loyal members of his team would be there to help him.

She allowed herself one small smile and stepped through the portal to the jump deck.

The Medlab opened before her. What had gone wrong?

Frowning, she looked around and saw Aleea. She lay unmoving on a narrow bed, her face colorless.

She walked across the room. “You look quite lovely dead, Centeran bitch.” She reached out and stroked the golden-brown hair that framed the white, heart-shaped face. “For such a small woman, you were tenacious. But I won in the end, didn’t I? You’re dead and the royal family will fall.”

The woman’s expression was too serene. Blast her to hell, she hadn’t been better in life, she wasn’t going to be better in death. Wrapping her fingers in Aleea’s hair she yanked.

Aleea yelped and her eyes flew open. “Blast it. Raeder didn’t say I had to lose hair.” Aleea scowled at the man behind Tayera as she rubbed her head.

Tayera, her eyes huge, jumped back. “You’re dead.”

Hard hands closed on Tayera’s arms as she stood, open-mouthed, staring at Aleea.

“How could Raeder have known she’d pull a dead woman’s hair? Who goes up to a dead person and does that?” Zaen, Raeder’s brother, had a voice as dark and smooth as Griiliig whiskey. He wasn’t as handsome as Raeder, perfect like Kael or sensuous like Pantair, but he had an air of danger about him that made her shiver. No doubt he had women throwing themselves at him wherever he went. What was it with these men? Why couldn’t they be ordinary, average guys? Of course, if they were they wouldn’t hold the same appeal.

“You’re dead.” Tayera said it again, her tone was accusing.

“Apparently not.” Aleea turned her scowl on Tayera. She wanted to lie down and sleep for a week, not face the woman who had been behind her latest near-death experience. She was weak as a newborn and

her stomach kept rolling.

Raeder stepped through the portal followed by Pantair and Kael. He looked at Tayera. "Take her to Allouria," he ordered the others. "Father has requested the pleasure of dealing with her." He had wanted to see justice done but his father had taken it out of his hands.

He turned to Aleea dismissing the traitor from his mind. "You need to rest. The joining ceremony has been postponed, not canceled."

She watched the three men, escorting Tayera, walk through the portal before looking back to Raeder. "And the crystal cavern consummation?" Was there a cavern any longer?

"And the consummation. You don't get out of that either." He lifted her off of the table, held her tight to his chest as he walked through the portal and to their chambers. He laid her on the bed. She looked right there. Perfect. When her color returned, he might even be able to forget he'd almost lost her.

"Incom. Clear view."

He lay down beside her, pulled her into his arms and watched the stars. His whole world, everything that meant anything to him was in his arms and he would never let her go.

* * * * *

Aleea woke instantly but not happily. She felt weak, her insides shaky, but she was alive.

She tried to move, found herself pinned to Raeder's side. She looked up and found him watching her, his crystal green eyes too serious.

"You need to smile more." She reached up and smoothed the lines on his brow. She would never tire of looking at him. He was everything her dreams were made of.

"I almost lost you." His voice was a ragged murmur.

"But you didn't."

Eyes closed, he pressed his forehead to hers. "I want to lock you in my chambers and never let anything touch you."

"I don't think I'd like that. I enjoy having you touch me too much."

He lifted his head to frown down at her, one brow raised. "I should have said, never let anything but me touch you."

She wrinkled her nose. He was way too serious. She was alive and she wanted to savor that. "You told me once, not to long ago, that I would get to taste you. I've never gotten to do that and I want to."

"When you're rested and well, you can do anything you wish. For now, until the healers say you're strong enough, I want you to rest."

"You could help me, couldn't you?" Eyes wide and innocent, she reached between them and caught his hard, pulsing cock in her hand. She stroked and squeezed the broad length. He was velvet and steel.

Perfection.

He frowned but didn't take her hand from his penis. "What are you doing?"

"Playing." She pushed at his chest with her free hand. "On your back."

Raeder rolled over as she directed. His heart beat strong and loud in his chest. His cock throbbed in her hand. She was taking control and he liked it. He could take the upper hand if he needed to but for now he would let her believe she was in charge. And he needed to feel her, alive and his.

She grasped his cock in both hands and started to squeeze, alternating one hand with the other.

"How am I doing?"

He smiled. She looked so serious, her gaze trained on his cock and her stroking, squeezing hands.

"Good. Real good." He groaned and his hips arched as she added pulling to her squeezing of his cock. "Blast, your hands are almost as good as your channel," he hissed.

Her womb clenched at his words. "What else do you like?" Her voice was hoarse. She hadn't expected pleasuring him would pleasure her as well.

"Your mouth on my cock. Sucking it."

Moisture rained down from inside her. She loved the feel of him in her mouth, wanted to taste him again.

She licked her lips as she stared at the bulbous head that poked over the top of her hand. It was broad enough it more than filled her hand, its flared head wider than the shaft she grasped.

Raeder almost came out of his skin as he watched her looking at him. Her tongue licked her lips and he felt it in his gut. He wanted that tongue on him, licking him. He wanted her mouth sucking him, her teeth sheathed against him, a hint of the possible danger he could be in as he was caught in her mouth.

"Are you going to suck him or just stare at him?"

Her hands tightened around him. Her eyes didn't leave the dark head that so fascinated her. "Don't you like me to look?"

He growled low in his throat. His hips bucked up once. "I like your eyes on me. I would like your mouth better."

"Would you?" She lowered her head, her hair brushing the sensitive head of his cock, curtaining her from his view.

He reached out and pulled her hair back so he could watch. Her mouth was a mere breath from his straining penis. If she puckered her lips, she'd be touching him.

"Do it." He ordered gruffly. That she wanted him this much humbled him.

She looked up without lifting her head. "In my time," she whispered, her breath a hot caress on his straining flesh.

His eyes closed and he grimaced. "Are you trying to kill me?"

A warm, moist, slightly rough tongue licked across the broad head of his cock. He jerked. His hands tightened in her hair. A low growl rumbled in his chest. He couldn't take her tormenting him any longer.

He sat up, grasped her by the waist and lifted her off the bed.

Her eyes flew to his. Her hands left his cock and grasped his wrists.

"What are you doing?"

"You'll have to play another time. Maybe in a hundred years I'll be able to stand your teasing. Right now I need you. You teased me into coming with your mouth on the head of my cock before. This time I want you to take me deep. I want to fill your mouth with my shaft as well as the head of my cock. I want you to swallow as much of me as you can and then I want you to take another inch. I want you to suck the semen from my balls until I'm sure I'll never produce another drop.

"And when you're done, I want to eat your pussy until you faint again. I love to feel you shake and hear you scream as your orgasm quakes through you. You're beautiful when your nipples get longer and redder as you come. Your pussy lips get redder, too; they match your lips."

She got wetter and wetter as he talked. Her hips moved without conscious thought, reacting to her wants and his.

He set her on her feet by the bed and stood up in front of her.

"Are you strong enough to do this?" He wanted her rested and well but he needed her, wanted this.

"I'm strong enough. I just don't know what to do." She stared up at him, her heart in her eyes. "What do I do?"

"On your knees."

Unhesitating, she did as he said. Her eyes were almost even with his crotch.

"Take my cock in your hands and squeeze and pull like you were before."

She licked her lips never looking away from his penis, tight against his abdomen, the thick vein running the length of the underside clearly visible.

"Take it in your hands, now," he ordered.

Lifting her hands, she grasped the thick pole of his cock, both hands tight around his hard shaft. It was smooth and soft yet hard under her hands, steel covered with satin. She squeezed and pulled, loved the feel of him in her hands. She was fascinated by the pearly drop of fluid that welled up in the center of the thick head.

"Lick it."

His voice was gruff. His hands fisted in her hair.

Her vagina clenched and she grew even wetter.

She lowered her head slowly to his waiting cock. The salty musk of his pre-cum was more arousing than any holo-vision program she had ever watched or any dream she had ever had. Who would have ever imagined his scent could be so arousing?

She extended her tongue and with the end pointed, flicked the head of his penis with it. A low hum vibrated her lips as she savored the taste of him.

His hips jerked and his hands released her hair to close around her head holding her in place as he pushed his penis against her lips. She was killing him.

“Take him into your mouth. Welcome him home.”

How were his words connected to her vagina? Everything he said made her hotter, wetter, readier for him. And she wanted him in her mouth, to feel him against her tongue, filling her mouth until she couldn't take any more of him.

“Open your mouth. Take him inside.” He had to feel her mouth on him now.

“You're going to have to do your part. I don't want to exhaust myself.” She opened her mouth but didn't move to take his hard cock into it. She looked up from under her lashes and waited.

His eyes narrowed and his hands tightened on her head. She wasn't going to get away from him. This time she was going to take as much of him as she could, more of him than she thought was possible.

He pushed the throbbing head through the rounded opening made by her lips, through the threat of her sharp little teeth and into the moist, hot cavern of her mouth.

Her mouth closed on him and she swallowed convulsively, working the head of his cock with heavy pressure as she did.

Teeth gritted, he surged forward, holding her head steady for his advance.

She gagged and he pulled back, her teeth a hint of sharpness against his shaft.

“Blast.” His eyes closed and his neck arched. “I'm sorry, Aleea. I've got to fuck your mouth. Suck me. Suck me hard.”

She wanted to tell him there was nothing to be sorry for but couldn't talk. His penis filled her mouth till her jaw ached. He was huge, the head hitting the back of her throat as he thrust into her mouth, pulled back and pushed forward again and again.

He moved slowly, not wanting to scare her or hurt her. Teeth bared, he gritted his teeth, fighting for sanity as her mouth pulled at him.

Her tongue rubbed and poked the bulb of his penis, tried to wrap itself around his shaft. Her teeth never closed on him but scraped along the length of him, catching behind the flared head of his cock.

Aleea's cheeks hollowed as she drew harder. She wanted him. Wanted to taste him again, to feel his

hot, thick fluid in her mouth once more.

He groaned, pushed deeper but didn't pump into her any faster.

She grasped his butt with both hands and pulled him forward as she stared up at him.

His low grunts filled the air. He looked down, surprised to find her glaring up at him. "What?"

She jerked his hips forward.

He shook his head. "I don't want to hurt you."

She jerked at his hips again, sucked harder. Her teeth scraped lightly along his shaft as he pulled almost out of her mouth. The threat made his blood run hotter and his heart pound.

"I'm too big. I could..."

Her teeth tightened just behind the head of his cock. He froze.

She rubbed the end of his cock with her tongue, poked, licked, circled, explored.

"*Effing hell!*" He pulled firmly at her hair but she didn't stop. She concentrated on the head of his penis, tortured him with her tongue.

"Alea." Her name was a plea and a demand. He couldn't think, could only feel. His balls were so tight they were about to explode. His cock kept growing, longer, thicker. The *loralegen* flowed from him, feeding her and she kept lapping it up.

Without warning her teeth released him, her mouth sank onto him and she swallowed him deep.

All he could do was react. Furiously, he pumped his cock in and out of her mouth.

"Suck it hard. Take me deep. Deeper. Another inch. Hot. Sweet. Tighter. "

Her mouth closed around him, drew him deep into her throat.

As she squeezed him tight, Raeder sucked in a deep breath, and felt his abdomen tense. His balls tight against his body, he exploded. His shout filled the room. He filled her mouth with his cum.

Alea swallowed, savored the feel of his jerking cock, the taste of his essence until there was nothing left in him to give. She pulled her mouth off his flaccid cock and licked her lips. Sucking his cock was more carnal than sucking and biting his nipples and chest.

Raeder pulled her to her feet and ground his mouth against her lips, puffy and red from working his penis. He thrust his tongue into her mouth, tasted himself in her. He grasped her waist, tumbled her onto the bed and went to his knees in front of her. He grasped her thighs in hard hands, pulled her legs apart as he yanked her toward him.

He didn't lick or nibble, didn't tease or torment. He dove right for her clit and drew it into his mouth.

Her hips bucked.

He held her down, didn't let her move or relieve the pressure of his sucking at her swollen flesh.

He licked the little nub, batted it with his tongue.

She tensed, her muscles growing tighter until she arched off the bed, her hips moving in a fast pulsing motion against him. And still he didn't let up, just kept drawing on her.

A low keening sound tore from her throat broken by little sobbing breaths.

He licked and sucked the throbbing nub of flesh again and she exploded, her body writhing uncontrollably under the lash of the orgasm that ripped through her.

He buried his face in her pussy. He lapped at her wet flesh, delved into her dripping vagina, sucked at her pussy lips. He would never get enough of her.

When she went limp beneath him, her body racked by only occasional shudders, he quit. He pressed a kiss to her pussy, her clit, and finally her abdomen. He rested his cheek against her stomach, his hands holding her buttocks.

Finally, he lifted his head from her abdomen and crawled onto the bed beside her. He pulled her to the center with him and wrapped himself around her. They both needed a rest after that bout.

“Raeder?”

“Hmmm?”

“Do you think your—however many—great-grandmother and grandfather felt for each other what we do every time we make love?”

His eyes narrowed at her words. They had called it sex and fucking. This was the first time she had used the word love in relation to what they did together. Was she starting to feel something for him? Something more than lust?

“If they did, they were very lucky people.”

She snuggled into his warmth and smiled. “I think so to.”

Unable to keep her eyes open, she fell asleep in his arms.

Three light-cycles later

Raeder stood on one side of the giant crystal geode, Alea on the other. Her cheeks were pink, her lips red from biting them. Dressed in flowing robes that shimmered with rainbow colors as she moved and breathed, she was the most beautiful woman he'd ever seen. Just looking at her stole his breath. Her eyes sparkled and whatever she was thinking had her lips twitching.

His family, crew and the people his mother felt it was essential to invite to a royal joining ceremony all watched from the gallery of the cathedral. His mother had assured him five thousand was actually a very

small party. He still wasn't sure he believed her. But that wasn't what mattered. What did matter was the woman standing across from him. Everything that mattered to him was embodied in her.

The whispers and rustling that sounded like a roar to him quieted as the Archiedon spoke.

"Raeder, place your hands on the crystal."

He did as the holy man said.

"As a symbol of your commitment to Raeder, his people and position, place your hands on the crystal, Aleea."

She did as she was told. For better or worse, once the joining ceremony was complete, her life would be forever linked with Raeder's. He would be hers.

Stars, she didn't want to be a princess. She wasn't cut out to be royalty. What was she thinking?

"Close your eyes and open your minds."

Aleea closed her eyes. They'd forgotten to tell her how to open her mind. Great, she didn't know how to be a princess and she didn't know how to open her mind. What else didn't she know how to do?

The matter was taken out of her hands. There was a wrenching sensation and she felt Raeder. His mind surrounded hers. For an instant she felt the complete determination he had to hold her forever as his own. There was duty to his people but there was more. He wanted her for her. He would share her with his people but first and foremost she was his.

Tears filled her eyes as she opened them. He loved her. If he was never able to tell her, she knew.

Warmth expanded in her chest, enveloped her. He loved her. The joining ceremony was so much more than she had realized. It was truly a joining.

"Yes, I do and yes, it is." His murmured words were for her ears alone. He'd read her thoughts.

Smiling, fighting back tears, Aleea nodded. "I love you, too."

An arrogant smile lit his face and eyes. "I know."

She opened her mouth to tell him what she thought of his attitude.

He leaned forward over the crystal and closed his mouth over hers. When he lifted his head they were both breathless. "We have a consummation to complete, Princess." His voice wasn't quiet.

A horrified look settled over her face.

He grinned as he strode around the crystal and swung her into his arms. The cheers of five thousand people rocked the ancient cathedral.

"I don't really have to be a princess, do I? What kind of princess would I make? I'm always in trouble or trying to die. People shouldn't be put through constantly almost losing their royalty."

“You’ve almost died for the last time, Aleea. Do you understand? My people aren’t the only ones who shouldn’t be put through that.”

“How—”

Another cheer rose as he kissed her again.

He lifted his head. “We’ll discuss it *after* the consummation.”

He strode through the crowded gallery.

A servant dressed in royal black with silver braid activated the translocator. Raeder acknowledged the man with a nod as he walked through the portal.

“I bet Aviar and Riliria didn’t do as good a job as we will at energizing the Rilirian Field,” Aleea stated smugly.

One guest, standing close enough to hear the new princess’s words as the couple passed through the portal, started laughing. Those around him asked what was funny. The comment passed from person to person until the whole gallery was roaring.

Ellowin leaned against Rieve and smiled. “I think she’ll fit right in.”

Rieve grinned and winked.

Ellowin laughed.

* * * * *

Far below the once great city of Mearyn, bathed in prisms of light refracted from crystals embedded in the walls, rising from the floor and dripping from the ceiling, Raeder pulled Aleea to him.

“You think we can do better than Riliria and Aviar, do you?”

Aleea wound her arms around Raeder’s neck and rose onto her tiptoes. “I know we can.” She pressed her lips to his.

Raeder let her lips brush against his. In his arms she felt small and fragile. He wanted to wrap her in Silar-Silk and lock her to him. He never wanted her hurt again, in any way.

“Kiss me back.” She whispered the demand against his mouth, her breath warm and moist against his lips.

She didn’t have to say it twice.

His mouth opened over hers, his tongue forced its way between her lips and into her mouth.

A hum vibrated in her throat as his tongue stroked hers, darting in and out of her mouth in a carnal message. Against her, his cock grew. Hot and hard, long and thick. She wanted him inside her. Now and forever.

His lips moved from hers, traced her jaw and down her neck. His teeth nipped her shoulder and she shivered.

“I want your cock inside me, filling me.”

There was a rasping hiss as the material of her gown gave way under his powerful hands.

She opened her mouth to protest as the shredded material fell to her feet, groaned as his mouth closed over her left breast. “You’ve got to quit ruining my clothes.”

“Mmmm.” He sucked the plump nub of her nipple. He rolled the hard berry against the roof of his mouth with his tongue, savored the sound of her breath catching. He nipped and she groaned. He tugged and she cried out.

Lightning flashed from his tormenting mouth to her womb. She was wet, ready, wanting.

“Raeder, I want you now.”

He moved to her other breast, rooted around her areola, closed his teeth on the tender tip. He wanted her now, too.

She moaned as he nipped and tugged. She grasped his arms to keep herself upright.

But Raeder didn’t want her upright. Slowly, keeping her nipple trapped by his teeth, he lowered her to the low consummation bed. His cock was hard, throbbing with the blood pounding through it. He needed to be inside her, to feel her clenching around him as he thrust in and out of her.

Her hands stroked over his penis through his clothes. “He wants me, Raeder. Wants to be inside me,” she whispered. His cock jerked beneath her teasing hands. “I can feel how much he wants to be in me. That’s where I want him, too.”

Raeder ignored her provocative words. “I want to taste you.”

He forced her legs apart, knelt between her thighs and lowered his mouth to her. He nuzzled through her wet, sensitive folds, licked and nibbled at the lips of her sex.

“Raeder.” His name was a whispered plea as his lips, teeth and tongue sent fire racing through her veins. Her vagina clenched. “I love you, love you.”

Her fingers tangled in his hair. She couldn’t hold still.

His tongue stroked the channel between the petals of her sex, teased the weeping entrance of her channel. He licked and nibbled his way toward her clit. She loved him. There was nothing more he could ever want.

Her body strained toward him, anticipation drawing her tight. “Please, Raeder. Touch me there. Lick me. Suck me.”

His lips nuzzled her straining flesh. It wasn’t enough.

Her hips bucked up. Her fingers tightened in his hair. “Now, Raeder.” It was both order and plea. She

needed him. She was on fire. He was torturing her.

His tongue flicked over her clit.

Sensation exploded through her. She cried out, writhed against him.

His powerful hands closed over her hips, held her in place.

She couldn't move. Wanted to move away, move closer. Her pulse beat under his mouth, rocked her body.

He flicked and licked, tormenting the swollen pearl of her sex. He licked around it, batted it with his tongue.

Every muscle in her body clenched. She was ready. She needed to come but he wasn't letting her. She tried to lift her hips, to force his mouth tighter against her.

He wouldn't let her.

Blast him, she needed him now.

"Raeder. You're killing me."

He rolled her clit with his tongue.

She screamed, her hips fighting his hold, needing to move.

"Raeder." She moaned his name. She was drenched with her need.

His mouth closed over her clit and he sucked.

Her mouth opened but no sound emerged as her world imploded. She jerked spasmodically against him. Sweat broke out over her body. Her head thrashed back and forth.

He didn't let up, threw her higher and higher into the storm. His mouth trapped her flesh, fed on it.

The cavern started to fade, her consciousness flickering as sensation became more than she could withstand and survive.

Raeder released her from the suction of his mouth. He studied the knot at the apex of her sex. It was swollen and red. He blew on it and she cried out. He pushed two fingers into her cunt, smiled when she whimpered and writhed against him.

He rose to his feet.

"Don't leave me."

He met Aleea's pleading eyes and smiled. "Never. You're mine now. You'll never get away from me."

He shed his clothes, lifted her from the ceremonial bed and carried her from the big cavern into a small alcove she hadn't noticed. A giant crystal rose from the floor. It was chin height to her with crystal spears

radiating from the faceted sides at different heights. It glowed faintly pink and she would have sworn the air around it vibrated. A low hum teased her senses.

Raeder set her on her feet in front of the crystal, turned her to face it.

“What are we doing?” She wasn’t afraid. Not really. Excited? Yes. Anxious? A bit. But she trusted Raeder.

“We’re going to consummate our union with Allouria as our witness.”

His low words made no sense. The planet was going to witness their union?

He moved her forward, positioned her so her sex was snug against one of the crystal spears. His hand moved between her pelvis and the crystal column. He stroked her folds, teased the swollen nub of her clit.

She groaned and rocked against him. She felt weak, boneless from the climax she still hadn’t come down from. His touch was almost painful on her throbbing flesh.

He moved his hand from between her legs.

She rocked forward, wanted him to keep touching her. Her eyes widened as the motion rubbed her clit against the crystal outcropping.

“Raeder?” She started to step back.

He moved behind her, kept her in place against the crystal. He wedged his leg between hers, forcing hers apart. “Hold the crystal.”

She lifted her arms and grasped the crystal spire. She trusted Raeder as she had never trusted anyone. She would do whatever he told her. She just had to make sure he never found out.

He stood behind her, radiated heat all along her back and thighs.

She couldn’t have moved away from the crystal if she tried. It wasn’t straight but leaned slightly forward. It was too big for her arms to go around. Instead of smooth, the surface was rough, almost raspy.

He rubbed his cock between her folds in her wet heat. “Trust me.” He pushed against her entrance, grunted as the thick head of his penis popped through the resistive ring of muscle. Just pushing into her could make him come. She was so wet. Hot. Tight.

He surged into her, rubbed her against the crystal as he did.

Her eyes widened and her mouth dropped open. Raeder forged into her with heavy pressure. Crystal rubbed her clit. Her breasts were crushed against the spire, her nipples rolled against the rough surface.

“You didn’t tell me we were going to be playing with rocks,” she gasped.

Raeder grinned. Only Alea would say something like that at a time like this. He grunted as he pounded into her, fast and hard. She burned him alive. Her inner muscles clenching and releasing, milking him.

Aleea held tight to the crystal. Every time the sensations were bigger, stronger. He was so big, his cock hard and hot.

She groaned as he slammed into her, forcing her open with his shaft.

His cock surged in and out of her cunt, a burning slide of power forking into her, through her.

The pressure was tremendous. She couldn't move, could only hold on as his cock split her, his weight forcing her against the crystal column. Her clit was worked with continuous pressure, back and forth. Her nipples tight and swollen. Every nerve ending screaming for release. She gasped for breath. She wouldn't survive.

He couldn't be gentle, didn't want to be. She was a flame around him. His cock surged in and out of her, lightning strokes that burned them both. He was going to explode.

"Make me come, Aleea. Milk me with your cunt."

Her insides clenched at his words. "I..." She lost what she was going to say, wailed as power surged through her. The crystal vibrated, pink deepened to red.

Hands braced against the crystal, his hips slammed against her ass, his flesh slapping against hers. The wet sound of his cock forging into her cunt, pulling almost free before slamming forward again, filled the room. The low hum of the crystal swelled.

He couldn't think. Her heat burned him. Her wet velvet depths gripped him, seized around him. Power surged into him, through him, bound her to him.

She couldn't breathe.

He surged in and out of her.

Heavy pressure, lightning strokes, fire burning. She was one with him, her spirit rising to meet and mesh with his. She could feel what he felt, his need for her. He wanted release, wanted the hard fast ride to never end.

He was one with her. Felt the inner clenching as her orgasm went on and on, rising higher and higher.

She was dying. It couldn't go on. She didn't want it to stop.

He crushed her to the crystal, moved against her, his whole body crushing her to the column as he tried to push deeper, to rock harder against her.

Energy, pure and powerful, linked them. She felt his need growing. He needed to come, had to release his seed into her. He needed more. Something only she could give.

"Raeder." His name was a wisp of sound, gasped out as his hips pounded against her, his cock moving in and out of her in a fast, frantic rhythm. "I need you. Come in me. Share life with me." Emotion swelled in her, love, lust. She was his. He was hers. For now and forever.

Her cunt clamped around him. Spasms rocked her body against him. Power surged through them, bound them.

He exploded inside her. His cum, hot and thick and bountiful, jetted from him into her. He cried out, his head thrown back as the power raced through him into her and back. The sensations built and built. Red light pulsed from the crystal, filled the alcove.

She screamed, her whole body jerking with the power of her release, of his.

They were one, their minds, hearts, bodies and souls forged together. Their orgasm built, power feeding it, their minds expanded. They felt the world around them, the people in it, space beyond and planets beyond that.

For one moment, they were one with the universe.

Raeder slumped against Aleea. He fought for breath, his chest rising and falling, his body covered with sweat.

“Are you all right?” His voice was hoarse. He lifted himself enough to look down at her. He smoothed her hair back from her sweet damp face, reassuring himself she was all right.

Aleea didn’t have the energy to open her eyes. “When I’m sure I’m alive, I’ll let you know.”

Slowly, exhausted yet energized, Raeder pulled free of her clinging heat. His arm around her waist, he half-supported, half-carried her back to the consummation bed.

She lay down unable to support herself without his help.

He settled beside her, wrapped her in his arms.

“Raeder.”

“Hmm?”

“When we wake up, let’s do that again.”

He smiled as he rubbed his chin against her head nestled under it. “I think you were right.”

“About what?”

“We’re better at this than Riliria and Aviar.”

“Of course we are.” A smile lit her face. She felt smug, and why shouldn’t she? In every way, she was Raeder’s woman.

Epilogue

As Raeder and Aleea came together, hearts, minds, bodies and souls, the royal guests and all of Allouria witnessed the rebirth of a legend. A golden glow filled the sky and expanded outward. The Rilirian Field was reborn.

Aboard *The Heritage*, on guard against any threat to his home, Zaen smiled. It was a rare smile of exceptional beauty witnessed by none.

About the author:

Romance. Who can live without it? Certainly not Angelina Evans.

Born, raised and still living close to the Canadian border, she enjoys visiting her neighbors to the north when she's not busy writing. And writing has become a second full-time job since finding Ellora's Cave.

Her sincerest wish is that readers will enjoy her stories as much as she has enjoyed reading those of fellow authors—Jaid Black, Beverly Alexander, Heather Holland, Tawny Taylor and Judy Mays.

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