

FIONA JAYDE



DisArmed

Changeling Press

GrimJustin 2: DisArmed

Fiona Jayde

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Kara Dillon is a weapon.

Captured during a routine transport job, she is infected with the chemicals she was to deliver. The result is an explosive -- in her blood.

Halloway Duke is contracted to bring back a rogue pilot. Finding her isn't a problem. Finding her to be Kara Dillon -- a lover who betrayed him into enemy hands -- is unpleasant. Finding he still wants her is not something he will disclose. He will return her to UkrainaDva and let her deal with the charges against her.

Except she now needs a steady influx of his DNA to stay alive. Duke gave her enough blood when he saved her life. That leaves... other methods. If she begs.

Prologue

The dark slime of her blood blurred out of focus.

Kara shifted. Hugging her knees tighter, she wedged herself deeper into the corner of the MediLab. The dizziness would pass eventually. She hoped.

She'd lost count of how many days she'd been stuck here. How much of her blood had they drawn out for testing? The medTechs would be back soon with their injectors and instruments. At least they hadn't raped her. Lab rats were too valuable to damage, plus, there was a small matter of death to anyone exposed to her infected blood.

She thought of the weapon inside her. Easy and brilliant. Infect a carrier, pump in the activator. The carrier would be able to get anywhere, pass through any weapons check. A little nick, a bit of blood on a small but significant piece of equipment and *bam*. Watch it spark.

The guard restraining her in that last escape attempt was testament to a bonus feature. Strength didn't mean shit when your hired muscle was allergic to the toxin. Gingerly she touched a fingertip to the cut on her lip. The guard had struck her and two seconds later folded, eyes bulging, choking on his own swelling tongue. *Die, fucker*.

With a feverish gaze she scanned her handiwork. Steaming consoles, sparking scanStations. Pristine white surfaces stained with blood, sparkling with iceCrystal shards -- broken vials of her own blood. They'd left her a number of them -- in a hurry to get out after the cheap Davidian bioSuit didn't protect their guard from the toxin.

She was a pilot -- not a glorified weapon in some idiotic arms race. Why choose her? She had no training in infiltration, no skills of hacking into security, not enough charm to bypass human security units. She was here because she could absorb the toxin -- that same toxin she idiotically delivered to this fucking planet in the first place.

It burned her insides when they first injected it. After the episode with the guard, she tried to use it to escape. Not that it helped. Doors weren't wired. Fucking lock and key. Cheap ancient tech. As a consolation prize she trashed the lab -- smashing the vials of her blood on compStations and testConsoles. Dark red oozing on sparkling white, smoke and sparks weaving together in some complicated dance.

She heard something beyond the walls. Blinked hard. Focused slowly.

Laser blasts? She gripped a blood vial in her hand, rolled onto stiffened knees. When the room spun, she fought to keep focus. She smelled something burning.

The door burst open. A figure advanced through the thickening smoke.

She knew that walk.

She struggled to recognize him through blurred vision. Caught her breath when she did -- when he pointed that laserBlast dead at her forehead and curled his lip into a humorless smile.

"Kara Dillon."

The hope that flared inside her -- the joyous hope that maybe he'd charged in to get her out of this shithole -- died under that mocking glare.

"You're under arrest." His eyes, the cool steel gray of them, were flat. Disgusted.

Ignoring pain, she rolled to her feet, hating the weakness of being on her knees in front of him. "On whose authority?" Her throat was dry. The room was spinning faster.

His mouth was a cruel slash on a lean, striking face.

"Mine."

Chapter One

Everything was just fucking dandy.

Duke checked the grav fields, adjusting course to meet up with the rest of the team.

She should be fine now. Glowing with health. Shuttle sensors had monitored every breath, every pulse since he'd carried her unconscious body onboard. Luckily the medTechs were too busy crying over their equipment to object much when he carted her out of that shithole.

He'd pumped his own blood into her, along with the rest of the shit Lil had recommended -- electrolytes, fluids, meds. Unfortunately, there was nothing for that idiot mind of hers. The one that got the bigwigs of UkrainaDva to personally request his services.

Extract Pilot Dillon from Davidian SciLabs, deliver to Alan Verkov, Mid-Premiere.

Just another job. He'd gotten her out, he'd gotten her healthy, he would get her there. Professional. Just because he still wanted to fuck her brains out -- despite knowing what she was -- didn't mean that professionalism wouldn't apply.

He looked at her still body, clean now from the lightShower, asleep on the flattened coPilot chair, her face still pale, her lips hinting at pink. Her hair was pulled back, but he knew the wild black curls would reach the small of her back when unwound. He remembered the exact shade of her eyes, deep exotic brown, complemented by the smooth caramel hue of her skin. Now that her skin had been leeches of color, her long lashes formed delicate shadows on that usually strong face. The fragility of it irritated the hell out of him.

Fragility, his ass. She was a stubborn, lying, smuggling bitch.

He felt the old anger boil, clenched his fists at it. When incoming beeped, he didn't bother keeping his voice soft. "Shuttle Three."

"Your status?" Lil's voice was pitched low. That serenely beautiful face hid a mind as sharp and smooth as a Terranian shoganSword. He wondered why he had no interest in stroking heat into those ice blue eyes.

"Peachy." He deliberately didn't look at the coPilot recliner. "Still on schedule."

Lil lifted an elegant eyebrow. "Her readings are steady. All she needs is rest."

Duke shrugged. As if he cared.

"You figured out what went on down there?"

Again, a shrug. "Not my problem. Knowing her, a deal went sour." *Because she was a greedy idiot.*

Lil took a breath. "How many supplies have you got over there?"

He wasn't sure he liked the question. "Enough to last. Planning to ditch me?"

Lips pursed, Lil raised an eyebrow. "The toxin in her blood. Until I can treat it, I can't allow either of you to board."

"I wasn't affected." He'd wondered at that as soon as he saw the sciTechs in their bioSuits.

"I have a theory about that." She paused. "Brenner said you know her."

Duke glanced to the side. Her mouth. He knew that mouth -- that carnal, dark fantasy of her lips wrapped around his cock. The soft cries, the lusty moans when he drove into her. The cool lies of whispered endearments.

He shrugged. "I fucked her a couple of times when we were on Orpheus."

"I... see." If Lil was bothered by the deliberately crude way he put it, she ignored it. "When you fucked her, did you know she was part Tervian?"

"You want a blow by blow account?"

"Some other time." She rolled her eyes. "The DNA of that species is somewhat of a mystery. If you shared body fluids -- which would have happened as you fucked her" -- he almost chuckled at that -- "her DNA probably attached to yours. So, if she's

immune to this toxin, you're immune to this toxin. Congratulations. Your dick saved your ass."

Any other time he would have laughed.

Instead, Duke crossed his arms, his glance briefly touching on Kara's motionless body. She still hadn't moved. *She's fine. All stats normal.* "Verkov obviously knew this."

Lil raised her eyebrows. "You weren't cautioned to wear protective gear?"

"Nope." It would explain why Verkov requested him specifically. "Do me a favor, have Brenner triple the contract fee. Risk factor, etcetera. Send me the forms when he's done."

"Now I'm a secretary." She sighed, rolling her eyes again. "That blood transfusion you did?"

He had a bad feeling about it when she paused. "What about it?"

"Her body absorbs a small amount of DNA she comes in contact with. From what I understand, she will need to adjust to having a much larger... dosage, if you will. To ease potential symptoms, she will need a continuous recharge."

"Recharge of what?" he snapped when she didn't continue.

"Can the attitude." She sounded annoyed. As if she had problems. "Your DNA. Blood, body fluid. You get the idea. When I get you both onboard I'll be able to do a spray. Until then..." She trailed off.

Until then he had to provide her with blood, spit or semen. Fucking perfect.

* * *

Three hours later, Duke rechecked Kara's vitals. Pulse, bp, all readings normal. Feeling like an idiot, he scanned for internal injuries, forcing himself not to look at the soft swell of her breasts under the dark gray of her suit.

"You aren't dead."

He made himself not react, even though a ridiculous joy swelled inside him. She was healthy, unharmed. Alive. Those deep, guarded eyes stared up at him.

"Your concern for me is touching." He continued to scan her.

"You got me out. Why?" There was a rasp in her voice, mixing with the low smoke of it.

"You're a job."

Kara flinched.

He told himself he was right in being a bastard. Wordlessly he scanned her torso, noting the fine shivering that rippled on the bare skin of her shoulder where the suit had ripped. Her temperature was dropping.

"Restroom?" she asked then, in that same husky voice.

"In the back."

She rolled on her side carefully, like an old woman, and pushed herself up. Swung her legs over the side to stand. Then folded as her knees buckled.

Muttering obscenities, Duke lifted her, a hand under her knee, an arm under her shoulders. When her forehead came to rest at his chest, the gesture so fucking trusting, he nearly dropped her just for the hell of it.

He carried her to the small partition at the back of the shuttle, unceremoniously dumped her on her feet, his irritation flaring higher when he saw her grip the sink to keep herself upright.

"Let me know when you're done," he gritted through clenched teeth and left before he did something obscene. Like hug her.

* * *

Kara stared at herself in the mirror as she rubbed her arms against the chill. *Think, damn it.*

Duke had gotten her out. A job, he'd said. For whom?

She needed intel.

The stiffness in her knees was subsiding. She wanted water, fragrant lather to wash her hands, her face. Instead she settled for the cleansing action of lightWash. No waste, amazing results.

She felt fine. Rested. Her hormones singing from wanting that jerk again. Something about that rock solid physique always made her juices run. Still handsome

as hell with those cool gray eyes and lean rugged face. His hair was shorter now. His nose looked like it had been broken and not set properly. She'd felt the muscles in his arms bulging when he'd lifted her as if she weighed nothing. Anticipation fluttered through her belly, a ridiculous feminine thrill knowing he could easily take her. If he wanted to.

"Done yet?"

Resentment flared at that mild cool voice. He refused to listen. All those times when she'd tried to reach him, he'd dismissed her, choosing to hate her with bitter disinterest. Yes, she'd failed. Yes, she'd betrayed him. She'd had no training to resist interrogation. If he was disgusted with her for that...

"I'm coming in within two seconds."

Fucking arrogant prick.

She stepped closer to the partition, gritted her teeth in anticipation. Timed it. He was halfway in when she shoved a handful of cleaning solution in his face, following it by a kick to the knee and another kick to his groin. He roared, literally roared, and grabbed for her arms. An elbow connected with his gut, a hand cracked sharply against his jaw. Then she was on the floor, rolling, gripping, cussing, his weight crushing her, his hands like gravTraps around her wrists. His cock, already hard, pressed against her belly.

Kara fought for oxygen as she stilled her body. Fighting against his grip was useless. "You always get hard when hit in the nuts?" She struggled to breathe with his weight on top of her. Hopefully he wouldn't shatter the vials under her armpits.

"You missed, sweetheart." Duke stared down at her, his eyes hot. "You always did have trouble finding it."

A crazy part of her was excited at the light of conquest in his gaze.

"Can you blame me?" She breathed fast, blood and heat pumping through her. "It was tiny."

She could tell he fought for control as he rubbed his cheek against hers, less in affection and more to get the cleanser off. His skin rasped against hers, his scent clean

and male, striking straight into her belly. She took a small insane pleasure in it as she inhaled.

"If you ask nicely, I'll refresh your memory." His voice was ragged. The memory in question flashed in her mind. His weight pressed down, the heat of him delicious.

"Like hell." A part of her, the small insane part, felt giddy at that helpless feeling of being trapped under him.

He leaned closer to her face, his breath tickling her cheek, the motion forcing him lower against her center. It made her cunt tingle.

What the hell was wrong with her?

"You know," he rolled his hips forward in a slow motion and she barely bit back a moan, "I remember what you're like when you're excited."

Wordlessly, she stared up at him.

"Your neck was flushed. Your lips were red. And..." Duke leaned in, gave a slow friendly lick at the vein beating right under her jaw, "... I could see your pulse -- right here -- when you were fucking me." He lifted his head, met her eyes.

Kara pasted on a smirk she hoped looked real. "Don't flatter yourself."

"Sweetheart." He curled his lip, lust and anger glittering in those gray eyes. "I'll make you a deal. You flatter me instead, and I'll give you what you want."

"And you know what I want?"

In answer, he wiggled his brows at her.

"Sorry, *sweetheart*." She spat the word back to him. "I don't do small."

He rolled his hips against her once more. "Now my feelings are hurt. You'll have to work to get me in the mood."

The huge bulge pressing against her was without a doubt in the mood.

"And I would do this because?"

"That's right, you would." He rolled his hips again, the burst of pleasure sending sparks along her skin. "When you were out --" he smiled again, a feral curling of his lips she didn't like one bit, "-- I had to give you blood." He leaned in again, his lips inches from hers. "As your body absorbs my DNA it will need to be periodically

recharged. Body fluids. Blood or semen." His lips were millimeters from hers now. "I pumped enough blood into you." She had an insane urge to kiss him. "Which leaves the other. If you ask nicely."

"Riiight." She was going to ask him nicely to go straight to hell.

"You'll beg for it."

"Fuck off." This was not happening.

Duke only smiled. "I'll make you beg for it."

"No!" She spat it through gritted teeth, struggled wildly. Managed to buck him, only to feel him land hard on top of her. *Shit, the vials.* She let him grip both her wrists, cussed him, screamed as she felt herself lifted and hauled back to the recliner. She kept cussing as he held her down, until he leaned in, and shut her up -- by claiming her mouth.

The restraints clicked in the silence.

Chapter Two

Rough, punishing, his mouth was on her.

Kara could fight it, fight the warmth rising in her -- until Duke gentled, cruising his lips over hers, softly, delicately. She moaned, sliding into the heat of it, reaching up to bring his mouth closer... felt that her hand was stuck. Trapped.

She was cuffed to the damn recliner, the supple metal of gravTraps encircling her arms and torso, one clasping her elbows to her sides, another one anchoring her lower belly to the chair. A third one held her legs immobile.

She ripped her mouth away.

In answer, he traced her lips with the pad of his thumb. She'd be damned if she was going to give in to the urge to kiss it.

"Impressive recovery speed." Duke's tone was mocking, even though his breathing was ragged. "A few hours ago you were sucking up fluids like it was your last breath. Seems like you're ready to suck something else." In contrast to the harsh tone, his hands were gentle. Warm palms were on her neck, traveling lower, lightly grazing skin seen through a tear in her suit. Lower, still. Gentle fingertips traced the underside of her breasts.

"You're a fuck --" In a quick motion he leaned in, nipped at her bottom lip, again cutting her off.

"I don't like being insulted. You'll have to apologize." He lowered himself onto his knees, positioning his body just behind her, her head level with his chest.

She closed her eyes, forced herself to be still, even as the sparks of heat danced across her nerve endings.

Duke's lips slid over hers again, warm, gentle. He took his time, teased her lips until she moaned, opened her mouth. He delved inside, his flavor exploding on her

senses. Arching up, she whimpered to get closer, unable to get there as the restraints held her and the only thing that helped were his hands, his thumbs on her jaw, his fingers under her neck, supporting her, lifting her to his mouth.

He drew away.

She moaned in protest.

He brushed his fingers on the sides of her breasts, watched her jerk. "Say you're sorry."

"Huh?"

Duke circled her breasts with his fingertips, not touching the budding peaks. His mouth played over hers once more. She moved, twisted her head to the side trying to stop him, stop herself.

"The restraints are exciting, aren't they?" He cupped her breasts, lifted them. "Remind me to thank the patent holder."

Kara didn't give a fuck about the patent holder. Heat and fury battled in her belly. She was afraid heat was going to win.

"Now where were we?" He cradled her swelling breasts in each large palm, still making no attempt to touch the aching tips. "You were apologizing."

Damn it, just get it over with. "Fine. Sorry."

He chuckled. Pursed his lips, nodding. And she bit back a moan, shuddering in pleasure as he slid his thumbs over each sensitive nipple. "I don't think you mean it." He kissed her again.

Lust mixed with fire. She took what he offered, demanded more. Arching into his touch, she lifted her breasts to pleasure. He kneaded, stroked, and rubbed the hard nubs of her nipples through her suit. His taste exploded in her head, the feel of his hands on her swollen breasts stabbing bursts of pleasure through her.

He tugged at the lightZip, drew it down. Pushed her suit apart. Bared her.

Warm calloused hands closed over her sensitive skin, gentle, then bolder, rougher, his mouth pressing burning nips on her jaw, her ear, her cheek, returning to her lips again. He kissed her ruthlessly, cleverly, and she tried to remind herself that it

was him, Holloway Duke, that he would kill her at the first opportunity, as she moaned like a bitch in heat under him.

The thought was enough to break her out of it.

She bit him.

He jerked up, his eyes glittering dangerously. Kara forced herself to look up, expected a slap. Was prepared for it. Almost wanted it, for it would certainly make this lust thing easier.

Except he leaned close by the side of her head and she felt hot breath in her ear.

"Now you've pissed me off." His fingertips closed around her nipples, pulling on them in a delicate milking motion, sending shots of fire through her with each slow tug. "You don't want me pissed." Duke nipped the fleshy part of her ear to emphasize his point, and Kara bit back a moan, thrashing her head as his hands continued to draw on her nipples, the pleasure arrowing straight into her cunt.

He licked a path along her jaw, a slow swipe of his tongue, and she whimpered -- couldn't help herself.

"You are a hot little bitch," he whispered into her ear, his fingers rougher on her nipples.

Those words should have enraged her. Instead her pussy clenched.

He stopped. She moaned. One large hand pressed over her lips as he leaned further forward and swirled his tongue around one hardened peak.

The thrill of it was insane. His chuckle made her hotter.

"You like that?" Leisurely, he swirled his tongue around her nipple, blew on it. Licked it again. Repeated it with her other breast, his hand cupped over her mouth, and she had the wildest notion to kiss that wide palm.

Then Duke straightened, and his hand was around her cheeks, squeezing. "You know what they do with hot little bitches, don't you?"

She heard a rustle of material and... no. No. She tried to turn away. The hand cupping her face made it impossible. "Open up," he said, that dark tone as infuriating as it was arousing. "We'll consider this an apology."

She narrowed her eyes at him in warning.

“Try it, sweetheart.” Again that dark tone, promising retribution. She was insane to find it sexy.

His thumb and forefinger pressed down on her jaw, forcing her to open her mouth. She fought him, fought herself.

Then his cock was above her, thick, hard and beautiful, the purple head already glistening, and her mouth opened for him, her tongue sneaking out to taste before she even realized what she was doing. With his free hand he searched for something under her, and the flattened chair purred, shifted, lifted her feet as it lowered her head, leaving her angled downward with the tip of his cock pressing against her lips.

“Open up, sweetheart.” That was all it took.

Slowly Duke worked himself into her mouth, loving the way Kara’s lips stretched over him, her tongue hesitantly touching fevered skin.

“If you try anything...” he kept a firm hand on her jaw, and pinched a pink tight nipple with the other, “... you’ll seriously regret it.”

He pulled out, stroked in. Fought the urge to drive in hard. Her mouth felt like silk, tight, wet silk and Duke shuddered, looking down at his cock buried between those lush lips. Watching her face, he caressed the peaked tips of her breasts, the sound of her pleasure urging him to delve deeper. Instead, he pushed slowly into the hot sheath of her mouth, his mind clawing for control.

This desire for him wasn’t real. He knew it, accepted it. Her body demanded a supply of DNA, her own hormones creating the urge. She never really wanted *him*. He pushed back into her mouth, his steady gaze never leaving hers. However artificial, Kara needed him and he would make her beg for it every time.

Kara stroked the tip of his cock with her tongue, loved the rich, salty taste of liquid already spilling from him. Fiery pleasure sparked at her breasts, feeding the ache deep in her belly. She clenched her thighs, unable to touch herself where she wanted it most. She squirmed, moaned around his cock.

Duke's hand left her breast and traveled lower, cupping her sex, and she arched up, moaned again as he plunged deep, so deep she gagged. Murmuring an apology he pulled back, his palm caressing her sex.

God she needed more.

"More?" His voice was low, ragged.

Beyond pride, she nodded.

"I'll let you spread your legs if you swear you won't kick."

She nodded again, felt him lean down, searching for something under her. A buzz, and her legs were free. Wantonly she spread them so they hung off the chair. His hand was back on her cunt, grinding, rubbing, deliciously teasing.

"Would you like to come?" He trailed his cock against her lips.

Again she nodded, breathless, wanting.

"What was that?"

"Yes." Her voice rasped out of her throat.

"Yes what?" He banged the tip of his cock against her mouth.

"Yes." She forced herself to be louder. "Yes, I want to come."

"Will you scream for me?"

Oh God. "Yes!"

She felt him reach for the lightZip that separated the two halves of her suit. Another tug and her hips were bare. She lifted her legs up and with a swift pull her pants were off, leaving her exposed, ready and dripping wet.

The cock at her mouth demanded entrance. Eagerly she obeyed, settling her legs down when she felt his hand brush against the triangle of hair on the top of her pubis.

With soft teasing motions, he gently explored between her spread legs, chuckling when she moaned at the tip of his finger fluttering against her soaked opening. When she whimpered, he lightly inserted a finger inside her, then slowly pulled out, drawing out her juices along her slick folds.

He teased her then, timing each stroke of his cock with a downward glide of a light fingertip just on the edge of her pulsing clit, alternating sides until she was panting, moaning with each beat, arching herself toward his touch.

“Like that?” He closed his fingers against the swollen pulsing center of her and drew it out with slow pulling motions, timing it with his own strokes. The pleasure of it was so dark, so brutally erotic, she felt herself spiraling faster, harder.

“I want you to scream around my cock when you come.” Duke slowed down, just kept his cock in her mouth while he pumped her rougher, quicker, and Kara coiled inward, felt the heat gather, and screamed as the orgasm boiled over. Screamed again just before he plunged deep into her mouth, roared and spilled his seed inside her.

Chapter Three

Sweating, fighting for breath, Kara willed her body to calm. Behind her, she felt Duke shift. "You still give great head, sweetheart."

Suddenly she couldn't wait to get the taste of him, so rich and male, out of her mouth. She was truly a complete idiot. "I need to... wash."

She heard him chuckle and refused to look up at his face as embarrassment heated her cheeks.

"Will you try another stunt?" He already sounded bored.

Don't you worry, she promised him darkly. "I'll control myself."

He hit the buttons on the underside of the chair and it reverted to its default sitting position before the restraints snapped open. She fought the urge to grab for her pants and run -- made herself casually pick them up. Just as nonchalantly, she tugged the sides of her suit together, felt the vials. All intact.

A glance from beneath her lashes told her Duke wasn't even watching. Instead, he was bent over a screen as if he hadn't just come in her mouth.

Fucker.

Fighting tears -- no way was she crying over that bastard again -- she slammed into the bathroom.

In the pilot seat, Duke let out a breath, staring blindly at some report he'd just called up at random. The scent of her was still on his fingers. He brought his hand to his face, inhaled. Same, and different. Richer. Stronger.

Just a job, he told himself. Kara needed his body fluids and he was more than happy to oblige. He'd still deliver her to Verkov and that would be the end of it.

When *GrimJustin* sent incoming he switched to char mode on the small screen, display only. Brenner's face filled the panel, his words superimposed on his image. *Doing okay down there?*

Duke used vocals to reply. "Fine. Fucking fine."

Lil should clear you in a few hours.

"I'm not worried about it."

Brenner's eyes narrowed. *You all right?*

"Perfectly." Duke drew in a deliberate breath. "I wasn't affected by the toxin in her blood."

And Verkov requested you by name.

"You believe in coincidences?"

Brenner's face softened. He threw a quick glance to his right. Dinah was probably next to him, off range. *Yeah, started to.*

Duke rolled his eyes, snorted. "Good luck with that."

Did you ask her about the toxin?

"I doubt she'd tell me the truth." He worked to keep the bitterness out of his voice.

"Why don't you try me?" Kara slammed out of the bathroom, her hair pulled back from her face, her torn suit back on. Her eyes coolly furious.

On the screen, Brenner lifted a blond eyebrow. His image winked out.

Too tired to deal with it, Duke sighed. "Tell me about the toxin."

"You'll think I'm lying anyway."

He clenched his jaw. "I keep thinking you'll surprise me." Her quick intake of breath showed the barb hit home.

"It's a weapon." Her voice was taut. "Combined with an activator, an explosive."

"In your blood?" Unsure if she was telling the truth, Duke kept his voice bland. Dinah was already searching all legal and underground data for it.

"They --"

"Who's they?" He was being an ass, but if he kept her off rhythm maybe he'd get something useful out of her.

She didn't even glare. "They being the SciTech meds on Davidia."

"And you were there why?" Probably smuggling that exact weapon to the right buyer.

"Transport job." She said it calmly enough but he could tell there was something underneath it. "Didn't realize I was included in the shipment until I dropped off the chemicals."

"Who hired you?"

"People working with Verkov... Alan. Chief of something on UkrainaDva."

Duke stood, his eyes narrowed. "You're telling me Alan Verkov hired you for a delivery?"

She eyed him suspiciously. "That's what I'm telling you."

Wasn't possible. She must have heard him use Verkov's name. Why would the man send her to a third world planet with a high value chem? Davidia was nothing compared to the labs he had access to. The chems were probably illegal. She had been hired to smuggle them and tipped the scale by going to another buyer.

Hard to find good smugglers these days.

"Looks like your boss got mad, sweetheart."

She lifted her gaze to him, pretending to be confused. "Excuse me?"

He chuckled, a low bitter sound. "Verkov isn't happy. There's some heavy charges against you. As soon as I bring you back to his headquarters, you'll have a few things to answer for."

Kara jumped on her feet now, all signs of tiredness gone. "You're taking me to Verkov?"

"Yep."

The flush on her cheeks was out of anger, but it reminded him of her skin flushing for another reason. He chased the image away.

"He's the one that got me into this mess in the first place."

Duke simply curled his lip. "Tough break."

"I'm not going to UkrainaDva." The determination in her voice left no questions.

He simply raised an eyebrow, knowing it would infuriate her. "I'm not asking your permission."

Kara felt chilled, but resisted the urge to rub her hand over the tear in her suit.

Her pussy clenched. She needed Duke again. His blood was working havoc on her immune system. She just hoped... she hoped it would end soon.

"Please." It appalled her even as she said it.

He shrugged those wide shoulders. "Sorry, sweetheart."

"You don't understand." God, she needed to make him see. "He set me up. He knows. He must have known I would be a carrier."

Duke strode toward her now, his jaw clenched. "I don't think you understand." His voice was cold. Under it was disgust. She couldn't blame him, but God, how long would he punish her? "You are going back to UkrainaDva. End."

She didn't back away when he came close, invading her space, probably to intimidate. She felt the heat of him, wanted to burrow. "I will pay double."

He smirked. "Typical. Won't work this time." His face was coolly, stonily impassive.

"You must understand --"

He cut her off. "I don't understand." Fury made his eyes darken. "I didn't understand how neoSoviet guards knew the exact break-in point. I didn't understand how my covert orders along with my digiSignature were flashed at my face as they prepared to execute me. Right after a fun bout of interrogation."

"I know. You have every right to blame me. But I swear --"

Again he interrupted. "I saw the money in your account."

"I'm telling you --"

"I'm done with this!"

No choice. It reverberated in her head as she swung, her fist connecting with bone. His head snapped back and forward, eyes coolly calculating. That cruel smile flashed as she flexed her hand to shake the pain from it.

"You're an idiot." He made a move toward her.

Kara stifled the urge to back up. Instead she shook her head and tugged a vial of blood out from the protective pocket under her arm. Before he could react she smashed it onto the main console, pressed her hand on top of the shards, and watched the blood from the vial mix with fresh blood from her palm as something hissed and flickered. The shower of sparks blinded her for a moment before the shuttle lurched, gurgled and spun out of control. All went dark.

Chapter Four

Pitch darkness encircled her, the emLights not yet on. Kara listened for movement, braced for battle. When she heard a shuffle, she crouched, reached out. Touched skin and heat.

“Are you all right?” Duke’s voice sounded hoarse.

She moved toward the sound of it. “Yeah.”

“I’m going to beat you.” He said it in a tired way, even as his arms came around to embrace her.

Thinking furiously, Kara allowed herself a moment to burrow, sliding her non-bleeding palm over the hard ridges of his abs, his chest, the stubbled skin of his cheek. Her blood didn’t affect him, but still, she didn’t want to risk anything, as much as the stupid bastard deserved it.

A thought flashed through her mind -- an old vid of self-defense tactics.

Praying it would work, she slid her hand down to his neck, under his jaw, where the artery would be, and pressed hard. Held her breath. He barely had time to curse before slumping.

The emLights came on, glowing soft green and yellow.

Breath heaving, she dragged him to the coPilot chair. That same damn chair he’d had her in, now in the upright position. She moved the restraints, secured his hands behind him. *Thank God for gravTraps*, she thought bitterly. On second thought, she secured his legs too.

Nothing like a big bad male tied to a chair to cheer you up, she thought, hysterical laughter bubbling inside her.

She needed to get out of here. Shivering, she walked back to the controls where the emergency stats were displayed. Gravity fields were obviously working. *Thank you*

for small miracles. Three days' supply of air, and equally stocked on rations. Now she just needed to land somewhere and get the hell away from him.

Kara shivered again, and looked back when she heard movement behind her. Did the controls short out? Was he up? She froze mid-stride, staring hard at his struggling body. Breathed a sigh of relief.

Duke was still there, muscles straining against the metal bonds. Big, buff and pissed.

Confidence growing, she walked back to him. "Revenge is everything they say it is." She rubbed her arms against the chill. The desire for him hit her full force, pooling in her belly, aching in her cunt.

"I swear I'm going to beat you."

"You already said that." She came closer, just a step away from him. Now that her eyes had adjusted, Kara could see his jaw was clenched, his muscles working against the restraints. He was radiating heat like a fucking sun. She wanted a piece of it.

Experimentally, she ran her hand over the smooth material of his pants, found the lightZip. Rubbing her palm up and down over it, she then curled her fingers around the growing bulge.

"What the fuck are you doing?" Duke's voice, raw, hoarse, made her pussy quiver.

"Relax, darling." She kept her voice smooth, resisting the urge to rip, tear and feast. "Just having a little fun."

"You overestimate your appeal."

"Really?" She laughed, then drunk on power, swung her leg over him and straddled his lap, purring as she rubbed her crotch against his hardness. "Let me try again."

She gyrated her hips, slid over him, ground into him. She nipped at his lower lip, and when he hissed and tried to turn away, Kara caught his head in both hands and kept it steady. "Payback's a bitch," she whispered, and slid her mouth over his.

She feasted. Devoured. Drove him crazy with the little moans that ripped out of her throat as he parted his lips and he let her take more.

Duke fought against the restraints, cursed himself three times an idiot. Didn't think about the small nipping bites along his jaw, his neck. Fingers parted his bodyShirt, impatient lips trailing heat on his chest. He hated the pleasure coursing through him as much as he wanted it.

When Kara slid down to free his cock, he snapped his teeth together to control a groan.

"Still not in the mood to play?" she whispered, curling her hand around his pulsing erection, pumping slowly, silkily.

"You fucking bitch."

She chuckled and he swore revenge with every ragged breath.

"I guess I am."

She leaned in, coated him with her mouth. Then the warmth of her left him and before he could protest he heard a swift rustle, felt the smooth skin of her leg over him and then he slid home into the silky, wet sheath of her pussy. He fought the pleasure of being inside that hot cunt, fought it with each smooth roll that gripped him, milked him.

Pumping him, she plastered her lips over his, silk thighs rubbing against his legs, her mouth hot, her pussy scorching. Duke felt his balls tighten, fought the need to come, fought it with all he had but then that clever mouth closed over a cord in his neck and he arched up, groaned and surged into her.

When sanity returned he realized Kara had stopped moving. He could see her eyes, carefully blank, guarded. He knew, right at that moment he knew, that this was all she needed from him, his orgasm, his cum. Nothing beyond it. She wasn't going to let herself climax, and the thought of that infuriated him for no reason he cared to examine.

He clenched his hands, tried to rotate them as she silently got off him and with calm, impersonal movements put his dick inside his pants. He resisted the urge to curse

her out again as she slid the lightZip back up, and walked away, sitting down on the pilotChair.

Duke glared at her -- couldn't do much else. The restraints had him, were digging into his wrists as he worked them. She was going to pay, he promised himself. Fuck, was she going to pay.

Determined to ignore him, Kara studied the console. The chill had gone now, and with it that slight muscle ache that accompanied it. Fucking blood transfer -- the sheer volume was enough to addict her for a long time. As it was, every few hours she needed a sex fix. Not just sex. More. She wanted what they started on Orpheus.

Hopefully it was the addiction talking. Although it made sense why Duke hadn't choked on his own swelling tongue on Davidia -- she must have infused him with her own DNA back on Orpheus. Which led back to Verkov.

Maybe she could make him understand now...

He was willing to fuck her -- she hadn't given him much choice -- but he despised her along with it. Who could blame him? She hadn't held back intel, couldn't, not through all that pain. Thinking of it, her knees ached, as if remembering.

Maybe she could tell him now. Kara turned to him, considering.

"Don't even think about it." His voice whipped over her.

"Relax, hotshot." She faked the mocking laughter because of a sudden and urgent need to just crawl into his lap and cry. She was nothing but a guilt-ridden idiot. "I'm not after stud services."

"I'm relieved to hear that." She couldn't see the sneer on Duke's face, but she heard it.

"It's not like you're that good." She curled her lip as she made her way toward him. "I just need your body fluids."

"Didn't seem like that when you were begging for it."

Kara could see the outline of his face in the green emLights, the clenched jaw, the tightly pressed mouth. Just for the hell of it she leaned in and nipped at that lower lip. The promise of revenge glittered in his eyes.

"I faked it." She shrugged. "You always had this thing about ladies first. I needed you to hurry, so --" She shrugged again. "Don't worry." She trailed a finger over his lips. "It won't happen again."

"Imagine my relief."

"Don't get me wrong." Unable to resist, she straddled him. "I'll continue to fuck you until you're out of my system. Since I don't need to come, there won't be a need for me to fake it."

"I'm so glad."

The dry sarcasm made her laugh softly. She twined her arms around his neck, rubbed her cheek against his. "You'll get used to it."

Duke made a strangled sound in the back of his throat. Before he could speak she took his mouth.

The shuttle dipped a bit, made a strange metallic groan, but as she lifted her head, his mouth sought hers, hard, desperate. "Kiss me, damn you," he rasped, and Kara lost herself in the sensation, wrapping her legs around him to get closer, whimpering.

The lights flooding her eyes to blindness were a shock. In defense she closed them, buried her face in the curve of his neck.

"Get this bitch off me." Duke's voice, raspy with passion only seconds ago, was ice. Blinking against the light, stunned, reeling from lust he seemed to turn off like a switch, Kara twisted to see figures, felt hands wrap around her arms and lift her. Her wrists were forced behind her. Supple metal closed around them.

"Her feet too," Duke said, as another figure moved closer to him, and Kara felt weight around her ankles. Through eyes tearing from the blinding lights, she saw his gaze settle on her -- frosty, accusing.

A hiss, a pop, and he was up. Fear stabbed her. She shrunk back against the man behind her as Duke advanced, rubbing his wrists.

“Hold it, lover boy.” The voice was smooth, amused and female. Kara blinked fiercely at the owner, barely able to make out a tall blonde in a shimmering bioSuit.

“You’re not contaminating the rest of the ship.” She handed him a small device. “Last one. You’ll have to share.”

Duke curled a lip in that same cruel smile she was starting to hate. “We’ve gotten close.” Kara would have stepped back farther, but as it was, she pressed against the man behind her.

“Careful, sweetheart.” In a swift, startling motion Duke hoisted her up over his shoulder, placing a large palm on her upturned ass. “Dinah won’t like you touching him. And she’s meaner than I am.”

A soft click and she felt something crawling along her skin. The bioSuit was over them both.

“MediLab?” he asked.

“Lil would have a fit.” This was from the man who put the restraints on her. The blonde woman -- Lil? -- snorted.

“Your quarters.”

Kara thought they would pile out after him, but Duke strode away alone, his shoulder digging uncomfortably into her belly.

Chapter Five

Back in his quarters, Duke dropped her. Simply dumped her onto her knees, getting some grim satisfaction watching Kara struggle to stay upright.

Payback was a bitch.

Incoming beeped. Shooting her a smirk, he turned his back to her, and walked to the comm center. "Yeah."

Lil's face filled the main screen. "We got your quarters sealed off. I also put a forceShield in the shuttle dock until I am satisfied we aren't blowing up."

"Busy little bee," he muttered. He could feel Kara's eyes boring into his back. It surprised him she wasn't screaming curses at him or trying to fast-talk someone into a pity party.

"You'll have to share quarters for the next few days. I'll need you to scan blood samples."

"Yes, ma'am." He faked a salute.

"Cut the shit, Halloway."

"Fine." He barked out a laugh. Lil was the only one who got away with calling him that.

"I left sealVials on your console. If you could get samples daily, I would appreciate it."

"Yeah. Okay, great."

Lil ended transmission before he could ask why Kara didn't seem to be addicted to renewing that toxin in her blood. Or if it was possible that he was starting to get addicted to her -- aching for her, his balls tightening just by looking at her.

He heard Kara shuffle behind him, and willed himself not to look back. Let her suffer. Just a bit, let her suffer for everything she'd fucking done to him.

Duke checked his inbox, sent out a few replies. Rolled his shoulders back. The mundane task of admin work was irritating.

He needed to deal with her.

Grabbing a sealVial with its inserter, he walked back to her, frowning as she shrank back, trying to shove away.

Without a word he held her still by grabbing a fistful of curls at the back of her neck. He forced her head up and to the side, pressed the seal against her skin, watching Kara's chest rise and fall rapidly as he held her motionless. Her lips were moist, parted, her breathing ragged. Was she getting off on this? Grimly he smiled. He was happy to oblige.

He took his own sample, set it to scan. Which reminded him of the vial of blood she'd pulled out of her suit before killing the shuttle.

Duke turned back to look at her. She knelt, shoulders forced back by the cuffs on her wrists. Breasts pushed out. Head bent. Like a slave.

"You will be naked until you leave." He schooled his features to be stone cold even as his cock started twitching to life. "Up. I will remove your suit."

She remained still, as if not hearing him.

"You look good on your knees. But later. Up."

No answer.

He strode toward her, roughly shook her shoulder. "Resistance is considered an invitation." He heard a shuddering breath.

"I can't," she muttered.

"Excuse me?" He kept his voice mocking.

"I can't," she whispered. "I can't."

"Why the hell not? Lust for me keeping your knees weak?"

"My knees are weak." Again that soft voice. It grated on his nerves. Was she playing the submissive routine?

"What was that?"

Kara struggled onto her feet with obvious effort, her face twisted in pain and... something else. "My knees are weak. You fucker!" She screamed at him now. "They were shattered when they interrogated me -- the night before you left for Kremlin!"

Duke felt the blood drain away from his face. Lie. Another lie.

"They who?" He fought to keep his voice mildly interested. His insides were clenching.

"If I knew, you think I'd be here?" There was bitterness in her tone.

No way in hell it was the truth. "So let me see if I understand it correctly. You were... interrogated?" He paused deliberately. "For information on me. Which somehow you had access to."

"You gave it to me." Her voice was hoarse now.

"I gave you what exactly?" *Yeah, fucking right.*

"The keySeq to your dataUnit. You gave it to me when the power was out at the dataCenter and you needed access."

"Bullshit." His insides were shuddering. Just lies. "So you were interrogated and valiantly you tried to protect me?" He cupped her cheek in his palm in a mock gesture of affection.

"I don't remember much of it. I just..." When she looked up at him with dark pleading eyes, it infuriated him further.

"Your knees were shattered?" *Like hell.* "Do you know what real interrogation is like?" Duke shoved his face inches away from hers, fighting to keep his voice deadly calm. "They strip away every dignity you have. Every cell in your body hurts. The drugs keep you conscious while your brain burns." He let out a bitter laugh. "Shattered bones would be evidence, sweetheart. Besides, a tasty dish like you would be much more fun with other methods of interrogation." He pushed that particular thought away. It hadn't happened. It wouldn't have happened. "You should've come up with a better lie."

Kara's eyes shone with guilt and fury; in contrast her voice was soft. "I have no other proof."

His gut clenched.

He paced, just paced back and forth, appalled at the part of himself that wanted to believe her.

Idiot. She is playing you just like she did then. At least now he had a way to control her. It had been a few hours. She probably needed him again.

He stopped in front of her. "You will be naked until you leave."

When Kara looked up at him, Duke felt relief set in. It was all a lie. She was pissed because he hadn't fallen for it. "I'm not exactly in a position to strip," she bit out between clenched teeth.

"Absolutely right," he drawled. "Allow me to assist."

He dug a small laserScalpel out of his pocket, watching for signs of fear. He got none. Excellent. He didn't want her fearing him. He wanted her to loathe him. "Hold still. I don't want to cut a strip of this lovely skin."

Carefully he worked on her suit, cutting it off her. When it slithered to the floor he kicked it aside, making a mental note to check the pockets. A quick tug and dark curls tumbled over smooth dusky flesh.

"Very nice." His cock pressed painfully against his lightZip.

There were goose bumps on her skin. And heat in her eyes.

Duke circled around her, noting the sexy way her bound hands teased him with glimpses of the crease between her curved buttocks. In the shuttle, he'd been so hot to have her he hadn't paid due attention to the firm round breasts that filled his hands to overflowing, the smooth slope of her belly, the hot triangle of black curls above the smooth pink lips of her pussy.

He itched to wrap his hand in the soft, curling mass of her hair. To taste the pretty berries of her nipples and dip lower. To worship that soft tight pussy and hear her moan for him. Later, he promised himself. First, establish control.

Standing in front of her, he inhaled, smelled her arousal. Kara's nipples were hard, the dark pink tips stabbing toward him. Real or not, she wanted him.

"You are still beautiful. Even with shattered knees."

"Asshole," she hissed at him.

He chuckled and reached around to slap lightly at her naked butt. "Rules. Any name-calling will be punished. Any resistance will be punished. Any thought or move toward escape will be punished."

"And this is what?" she spat out. "Foreplay?"

Watching her breasts heave, Duke thought it was just that. He clenched his fists against the urge to just drag her on the bed and fuck her brainless.

"Punishment is a long overdue ass fucking." One thing they had never done. He heard a drawn in breath and smiled. Good. "You want me again." He stood in front of her, and when Kara wouldn't meet his eyes, he tipped a finger under her jaw to lift her face. "Admit it."

She shook her head. "No."

He chuckled. "We'll have to fix that."

Telling himself it was only to establish control, he gave in to the urge to touch her and ran his hands over the smooth skin of her arms, her shoulders. Drew her closer to slide his palms over her back. Her buttocks. Her pointed nipples stabbed into his chest.

Her indrawn breath had him smiling even though his own arousal was starting to get painful. "You like that?"

"Tied up and felt up? Every woman's fantasy," she replied hotly.

"Was that sarcasm?" Just in case, Duke smacked her ass again. Rubbed away the sting. Watched her face to see her eyes cloud, her lips part.

She hated it. And was aroused by it.

"I bet it is your fantasy." He continued to rub her buttocks, just stood in front of her and caressed her. Her cuffed wrists pulled her shoulders back. Her breasts -- high, pert and pink-tipped -- were thrust forward in invitation. "You always liked it when I held you down during sex. Or did you fake that too?"

"Bastard," she spat out.

He grinned, smacked her ass once more. Then squeezed the round cheeks in his palm, forcing her closer. Slid his mouth onto hers.

The warm ache gathering in Kara's belly fought for space with curling strings of shame. She got off on this shit? Fucking stupid pathetic idiot.

Duke kissed her, his lips skillfully sliding over hers, his hands kneading her butt. Then lower, parting the folds of her cunt, teasing the pulsing clit with the gentlest of caresses. She wasn't sure when she started kissing him back. Then he pulled away.

"Do you want to fuck?"

She looked up at that cruel smile and tried to gather her wits. "I want you to go to hell."

Again a smack. Her cunt throbbed, and she barely contained a moan. What the hell was she doing? *Just tell him what he wants and get it over with.*

His wide palms rubbed her butt, fingers probing the crease between. "Is this your way of telling me you want your ass fucked?"

Oh God. Kara closed her eyes, feeling cream slide down her thighs, humiliation burning her cheeks. Her pussy clenched, aching.

Just his body fluids, she told herself. I just need his body fluids.

She licked her lips as an idea lit. "I need you," she whispered hoarsely. "Please. I need you now." The desperation in her voice was real enough.

Duke's hands circled her waist, and she was spun toward the bed. He sat. A heavy hand on her shoulder forced her onto her knees between his spread legs. His cock, heavy and bulging, sprung toward her and wordlessly she took him into her mouth.

Salt and musk and male.

She tasted him, took a long breath to smell him. Sucked lightly on the engorged tip, before running her tongue in light teasing licks along the length of him. Up on the underside, down on the other. She loved the sound of Duke's groan, and sucked him further into her mouth. His fingers tangled in her hair. His hips rolled forward. She

took more of him, deeper, then up, swirling her tongue over the sensitive head of his cock. His grunts made her pussy spasm.

Just get it over with.

She sucked, nibbled, and pressed light kisses on his throbbing flesh. His harsh breaths were just a means to an end. Large palms cupped her head, guiding her into a bobbing motion. Kara complied, sunk her mouth onto him, let up, sunk in again. *Just come already.*

His body tensed under her. *Close. Finish it.*

But the hands on her hair gently tugged, forcing her to lift her head. She met his hooded eyes.

"It's not going to work," he said softly.

Like hell it wouldn't. She went for his cock again, laving it with her tongue. The hand wrapped in her hair stopped her.

"Get up."

Before Kara could protest Duke's hands were on her waist, lifting her, turning her, except he didn't put her down, but carried her across the room, toward the computer console, and set her down in front of a monitor.

"What, your friends want a peep show?" She needed to be fucked, now.

"Close."

A few taps and the screens lit up, the main screen reflecting her, the side screens showing side views of her naked body. Her hair, wildly curling, hung around her shoulders. Her lips were pink and swollen. So were her nipples.

"You're going to watch." Duke stood behind her, still clothed, his jutting cock teasing between her buttocks. "Watch yourself begging for my cock."

Kara barely had time to think of a reply when he took her breasts in his hands. The monitor showed wide, tanned palms covering both mounds, gently kneading. She had no idea when he'd stepped closer, but she leaned against him, her head resting on his strong shoulder. As if hypnotized, she watched him caress her. Her hands, cuffed

behind her back, found the thick length of his cock. As if of their own volition, her fingers curled around it, pumped.

Thumb and forefinger tweaked each nipple and she watched herself gasp, arch into his touch.

Again that beautifully cruel smile. "You like that?"

She wasn't going to answer that.

Duke tweaked her nipples again, rougher this time. "Tell me."

Just end it. Just end it. "Yes," she gasped. She wanted his mouth on her. Hated herself for it.

"Good." He pushed her gently toward the console and stripped off his shirt. The muscled chest underneath gleamed with sweat, his abs standing out in relief with every rough exhale.

The shirt was dumped on the console, then he urged her forward over it, laying her on it. One of the smaller screens was directly in front of her. Unable to tear her gaze away, she watched him take her hair and move it aside to uncover the sensitive skin of her neck.

"Tell me to fuck you."

That didn't deserve an answer.

She expected another spanking, clenched her ass in anticipation. Instead, Duke's lips cruised over her spine, pressing gentle kisses over her skin. She shivered, moaned, and his mouth traveled lower, sampling her back, buttocks, thighs, tickling the back of her knees. Long, clever fingers parted the slick folds of her labia, slid easily inside her. Withdrew. Found her clit with light teasing touches.

She arched, tried to spread her legs wider, needing more.

Duke stopped. "Beg me to fuck you." His voice was erotically harsh.

"No."

"Beg me." For emphasis his finger slid inside her again.

Moaning, she clenched around him, knowing it wasn't enough. "Just do it."

He stood up, leaned over her and bit her ear. "Beg me to fuck you."

"Fine. Fuck me."

"Again."

"Fuck me, damn you!"

He filled her slowly, one torturous heartbeat at a time. Kara moaned, squirmed, tried to suck him deeper into her cunt.

All to no avail. He controlled his penetration, watching her watch him on the monitors.

Then he stopped.

She almost cried.

"Tell me again."

"Fuck me!" She watched him grab the restraints of her wrists, anchor himself, and sensuously glide deep into her soaking cunt. He withdrew, rubbing the walls of her pussy with his cock. "Fuck me, damn you!"

A long creamy stroke. "Say please." Duke's face pearly with sweat. Gleaming muscles tensed.

"You bastard." It was good, insanely good. If he stopped again she would kill him.

"Say please."

"Please." God, she needed this. She lowered her head, but the hand wrapped in her hair urged her up.

"Pretty please," he crooned, giving her just a bit more.

"Pretty please!"

"Pretty please what?" His breathing exploded in her ear. Kara couldn't help but watch.

"Pretty please just fuck me! Now!"

He smiled. Filled her completely. "Your wish," he ground out between strokes, "is my command."

Slowly he plundered her pussy, drawing scream after scream from her hoarse throat. Sliding against her, the deliberate rubs of his cock winding the approaching

orgasm tighter. She clenched around him, froze, gasped... exploded. Duke plunged hard, rode her through it, fucking her mercilessly through her climax, deeper, fuller, until she felt him stiffen, press his lips to her neck. Empty into her.

Chapter Six

Each breath was a boneless struggle. Above her, covering her, his hand still wrapped in her hair, Duke sounded like he was doing the same. On the monitor Kara saw his face, eyes closed, forehead gleaming. Was she mistaken, or had he just pressed a kiss to a lock of her hair? Then cool air brushed along her bare back as he rose, helping her to do the same.

She rolled her stiff shoulders. Winced. Felt his hands on her arms.

“If you don’t pull any stunts, I’ll remove the cuffs.”

She spoke before she could think, still reeling from an incredible orgasm. “I’d need a few hours to muster up energy.”

She felt loose, warm. Somehow he seemed the same.

He chuckled, and to her shock pressed a kiss on her shoulder. “Flattery,” he murmured, “will get you everywhere.”

His hands slid down to her wrists, pressed a series of keys on the restraints. They loosened until one hung off her wrist like a kinky bracelet. Kara tried to move her arms and didn’t hold back a groan of pain as blood rushed into stiffened muscles. Then Duke’s hands were on her shoulders, kneading, pressing. He took one arm, rotated it, repeated the sequence with her other arm.

Stepping in front of her, he brought both her arms forward, crossed them, then stretched them. Rubbing warm calloused hands over her, he pressed his lips to her wrist.

Froze.

She opened her eyes to see him staring at the healing scars on her palm. Seconds later the restraints clicked back, locking her wrists in front of her. “You said --”

"I lied. You're familiar with the concept." His voice, warm only seconds ago, was ice sharp.

Trust him to ruin the mood. She firmed her lips together and schooled her features to be blank.

"I need to make a call. Get out of range unless you want Brenner to see your tits." He shrugged on his shirt, righted his pants.

"You're a real fucker." She was tired. So tired she could barely put heat behind it.

"Is that an invitation?"

She was starting to hate that arched brow. Since he'd already engaged the monitor, she was cut off from the bed or the restroom. So she moved back, wedged herself in a corner by the wall and the console and closed her eyes.

How could he go from ice to heat then back to ice in just moments?

Duke loathed her. Sex was pity and rage combined.

She'd have no more of it.

Exhausted, mind reeling, Duke reached Brenner.

"You two done?" Jack's face was completely bland.

"In a manner of speaking." The scars on her palm had snapped him out before he completely lost it. She was a liar. She would do anything and everything to get out of this. He needed to remember that before losing his own fucking head.

If Brenner noticed anything, he kept it to himself. "I need you up here. Trent isolated the reaction and is rigging up something." He chuckled. "Lil is not thrilled."

"Fine." Duke tunneled his hands through his hair. From the corner of his eye he saw Kara sitting against a wall, her hair spilling around her shoulders, giving him tempting glimpses of flesh. He needed to get away from her. "When can you spring me?"

"Lil refuses to leave Trent alone with her equipment. Dinah is coming down to do a final scan on you."

“Great. I’m going stir crazy in here.” This was purely for Kara’s benefit. He watched for a reaction -- got none. “I need to program the bioFilters to wrap around anything damageable as soon as blood particles are detected.” Speaking of which, he needed to get the vials out of Kara’s suit so she wouldn’t pull any more stunts.

“Ask Trent. It will keep him out of Lil’s hair.” Brenner chuckled.

“Yeah. We still need to finalize the adjustment to the contract --”

His door beeped. “Dinah’s here. I’ll catch up with you later.”

Ending transmission, he went to open the door, hearing the scan of the bioFilter. A beep of agreement and the door parted, allowing Dinah entrance.

Her gaze landed on something beyond his shoulder.

“You motherfucking asshole!” She shoved past him and made her way half into the room before turning around, as if unsure what to do with the naked female huddled against the wall. “What the hell are you doing? You keep her naked as some sort of --” She searched for the right word. “Some sort of fuck slave?”

He really wasn’t in the mood to deal. “You jealous, sweetheart?”

Gold eyes furious, Dinah clenched a small fist. “I’ll show you jealous --”

Chuckling despite the bone deep weight in his chest, Duke covered her fist with a gentle palm. “Don’t. I won’t fight you and Brenner would kill me if you hurt yourself beating on my sorry ass.”

“Sorry ass is right.” Eyes blazing, she snatched a sheet off his bed and threw it at Kara. “Here.”

He watched Kara grab the sheet and cover herself with it. Head bent. Slow. Silent. As if he’d beaten her, for God’s sake.

“Allow me to make the introductions.” He hardened his voice, when all he wanted to do was lie down, drag her to him and sleep for a few hours.

“Dinah Burns -- Kara Dillon. Dinah hacked into the NewKremlin mainframe and managed to change Brenner’s and my threat status before they executed us. And this one --” He jerked his chin in Kara’s general direction. “This one is responsible for us ending up there in the first place.”

A part of him hoped Kara would protest, would start the same song and dance. Her silence somehow weighed on him. "Her manners must have shorted when she tried to blow up the shuttle."

Dinah's eyes hardened, though her face retained a neutral expression. "She gave Kremlin your intel?"

"The one and only."

Duke thought he heard a soft bitter chuckle. A quick glance told him Kara hadn't moved.

"All right." Dinah sighed. "Let's get you cleared. I can prepare quarters for --"

"No."

"What? Why?"

Duke curled his lip. "Let's just say she needs me. She stays here. I'll passkey the comm unit. Besides, Lil would hate to have another place to decontaminate."

"Well, let's not upset her then." Sugar-sweet sarcasm dripped. "At least get your friend clothed."

"She's not my *friend*." He bit it out, as if the word left a dirty taste in his mouth. "I had to get her out of her suit. She has all sorts of nasty toys in there. Besides, it was torn."

"I'm sure. I'll get her one of mine, and I would prefer it stays untorn."

If he wasn't mistaken, Kara shuddered. So he smiled. "I'm sure she'll try."

Chapter Seven

"I'd have thought regular sex would improve your disposition." Lil's voice, the mocking drawl of it, cut through the general misery of his mood.

Determined not to give a fuck, Duke slopped more soup. As if that little bitch Kara was doing him a favor by eating.

"And you think I have regular sex?" he finally asked, keeping his voice bland.

Lil shrugged. "I heard you have a little love slave chained to your bed."

His love slave sat against a wall every time he came in. Every time he asked if she had need of him, he would get a "no thank you" in that chillingly polite tone as if he was offering her tea.

"Dinah discussing my sex life again?"

Lil peered into his face long enough for him to be uncomfortable. "There's bags under your eyes. You haven't slept. I put two and two together."

He hadn't slept because for the past three nights he would have to physically pick Kara up from whatever corner she'd wedged herself into and drop her on the bed. Did she need him? Of course not. He'd spent each night in his console chair -- horny, frustrated and pissed as all hell.

"I haven't been sleeping much. But not from what you're thinking." Duke buttered a hunk of bread, adding it to the tray. Maybe Kara would eat it. She'd always liked buttered sweet bread.

"Your love slave getting tired of you?"

"Kara," he emphasized her name, "no longer needs me."

"What makes you think that?"

"Trust me."

Lil frowned. "How long since you two --"

“Really not your business.” He was done discussing it.

She placed a hand on his arm. “Seriously. She can’t be without your DNA. Not comfortably. Are you sure she doesn’t need... anything?”

He inhaled, thought back. She had been looking pale. Duke assumed it was because she was too stubborn to eat properly. There were circles under her eyes. He figured she wasn’t getting much sleep either. But... “What would happen?”

“If she went without?”

Duke nodded.

Lil pursed her lips, thinking. “I would imagine it would be very unpleasant. It manifests as a hormonal need. Similar to blue balls in the early stages.”

“And in the late stage?”

Lil laid down her plate. “How long?”

“More than two days.”

“Idiot.” Leaving everything, Lil headed for the door, Duke at her heels. “Her system could be going into shock.”

* * *

Lil and Duke barreled into his quarters at a run. On the bed, Kara was curled into a tight ball, fisted hands pressed against her belly. They rushed toward her, Lil whipping out her scanner, checking her pulse, her eyelids.

Then laughed softly. “She’s sleeping. Quite deeply.”

Undisturbed, Kara softly breathed.

Duke concentrated on slowing the pounding in his chest. He wanted to punch something. He wanted to lift Kara up and shake her and hug her and fuck her until they were both brain-dead.

Looking down at that sweet face, he blurted out the thing that had been on his mind for the past couple of days. “Scan her knees.” He whispered it, not wanting to wake her. He didn’t want the hurt silence that settled over her every time he came in here.

“First time you let me in your quarters and you want me to look at her knees?”

He sighed. Decided not to go into detail. "Can you just do it?"

Wordlessly Lil shrugged, and ran the scanner over Kara's legs. Frowned. Did another run. "Looks like there was significant repair work done here. Sloppy too."

"Yeah." Duke didn't know what to think anymore. "Any idea what caused it?"

"The injury or the sloppy repair?" Lil shrugged as if saying she didn't read into the past.

Determined to not feel like a complete idiot, Duke forced himself to back away. Walking to his scanner, he grabbed the vials of blood -- two fresh ones from himself and Kara, and the three he'd found in her suit. "Might as well take these now that you're here."

Lil's eyes narrowed as she came toward him, hand outstretched. "Let me see that." She probed at the tip of one and snorted. Shook her head. "This one yours?"

Duke frowned at it. Hadn't he put in a full vial? "Yeah, it's labeled."

"Well, now we know why she's tired of you, genius." To add insult to injury, Lil rolled her eyes.

He had a feeling he wasn't going to like this at all.

"See this?" Lil shoved the vial with his blood into his face, pointed at the top. "It's an injector. I assume you've seen one before?"

The sarcastic tone was starting to really piss him off.

"She's been getting my DNA after all."

* * *

Kara woke to buzzing.

The noise pulled her out of fog, even as her mind tried to slip back into the warm nothingness.

She opened her eyes to Tall, Dark and Gorgeous running a scanner over her, frowning thoughtfully over the readout. Her handcuffs were gone. Too bad she'd have to mess up that pretty face.

"Relax, honey." The voice, the deep lazy drawl of it, matched the rest of the package. "As much as I'd love to wrestle you, Duke would have my balls."

There was a quick sarcastic snort. On her other side, the blonde medTech studied another scanner.

"Lil might fight you for me though."

The blonde ignored him. Stuck out a hand. "Lillian Oser. I go by Lil."

"Kara. Kara Dillon." Surprised at the outstretched hand, Kara reached out her own. The palm that met hers was surprisingly strong.

"I'm Trent." Handsome stuck out his hand as well, held her palm just a few seconds, mischief dancing in his eyes.

"If you're done..." Lil's voice was cool as she addressed him.

"You want my attention, honey, you'll have to do better than that."

Lil rolled her eyes again, shook her head. "Kara needs to rest. Get out of here."

He chuckled warmly. "If you want to get rid of me, just say so." He stood. "Later, honey." Kara wasn't sure which honey he was talking to, but nodded just the same. He sauntered out.

As soon as the door closed, Lil produced a fist-sized box.

"I know about your needs."

That bastard was bragging about it? Embarrassment flushed Kara's cheeks with heat. She would kill him. Slowly.

Lil obviously read it on her face. "Relax. I read up on Tervian DNA."

Feeling foolish now, Kara nodded. "I'm half. I think."

That got her a sympathetic nod. "Men are generally assholes. Duke's one too, but he is a good man --"

"I don't want to talk about it."

"I understand." Lil shoved the box toward her. "The blood infusion helps, but it's not quite the same."

"Oh. You know?"

Lil just smiled. "Yes. You pissed him off good, if I may add."

Well, at least there was *that*.

"And this is..."

"You sound like him." This was accompanied with another grin. "It's a virtual reality module. I took the liberty of putting Duke's body scan in there."

Stunned, Kara looked at her, expecting the punch line. "Why?"

The grin was replaced by a sad little smile. "I know what it's like to want what you can't have."

* * *

In the commandPost, Duke paced. "Can this wait?"

"Lil and Trent are with her."

Brenner's cool stare was starting to seriously get on his nerves. "Trent's a medTech now?"

"Since her blood can explode every system on this ship, sure."

Duke paced some more.

"You want to tell me what's going on?" Again that calm tone.

"Nothing. Absolutely nothing."

"I would think regular sex would put you in a better mood."

Duke had had enough. "My sex life is not your concern."

Brenner's lips firmed. "Absolutely. However, the health of a prisoner we are contracted to deliver is."

"She's fine." She was fine. Absolutely happily fine, while he couldn't sleep with a hard-on from hell.

"You realize you're still in love with her?"

The question was like a bullet through the silence. "What the hell gave you that idea?" He saw Brenner try to hide a smile. *Fucker*. "Playing matchmaker now?"

"Just posing the question."

"She says she was interrogated for intel." It spilled out before Duke could stem it. "She says they hurt her. Shattered her knees. Barely remembers it."

"You believe her?"

"Would you?"

"Again, posing a question."

"I don't know. Lil did a scan -- there's damage there. I..." *Laughed at her*, he realized. *Fucking laughed at her* and she was hurting. "I fucked it up."

Brenner just raised an eyebrow.

"I don't know if I believe her. Plenty of ways to interrogate without breaking bones. She's a woman, for God's sake."

"If she was raped, you'd believe it?"

Duke clenched his fists at the thought. "That's fucked up."

Brenner shrugged. "They shattered her knees. That's fucked up too."

"You *are* willing to believe her."

Again, a shrug. "I saw the money in her account."

"Did you follow it?"

"Tried. But --" Brenner tapped a series of keys on the console. Dinah's face appeared on the central monitor. "Do a data dig for me?"

"Yes, sir." The "sir" was accompanied by a wide, wide grin.

Duke rolled his eyes.

"A significant number of credits were wired into a creditBank account on Orpheus. About a year ago -- Kara Dillon. I need you to trace it."

There was a slight pause. "You got it."

"Thanks." Brenner ended transmission. "If you want to break the contract, I'm all for it."

Dinah must have softened his brain. "Since when?"

"Just offering an option."

"And what, lose our rep along with the credits?"

Brenner smiled. "I seem to remember you attempting something similar. The only rep that suffered was yours when Dinah flattened you."

Was that only a few months ago? Shit. "That was different. I faked it."

Brenner barked a laugh. "I'll refrain from the obvious joke."

Chapter Eight

Kara placed the vStraps under the suit, just in case Duke walked in. Not that he would anyway. The only time she saw him was when he brought her food and at night, when he asked in that coolly polite tone if she needed him. Hiding a smirk, she was sure of it. Well, she didn't need anything, thank you.

So stop thinking about him.

She shoved on the goggles.

The room blurred for a bit, then righted.

She was on the same bed, with Duke, big, buff, gorgeously naked behind her, his chest at her back, his hands kneading her shoulders. No words, no smirks. Just gentle pressure, soft caresses with his big warm hands.

This she could do. Quite nicely.

Closing her eyes, Kara relaxed into him, let him smooth the tension from her muscles. When she felt his lips brush her neck she sighed, shivered a bit.

With her eyes closed, she twisted, felt her lips captured by his, sweetly, tenderly. As his mouth played over hers, his fingers gently cupped her breasts, lifted them, and massaged the sensitive flesh. She arched into him, offering her breasts to his touch. His thumbs brushed gently across her nipples, causing them to peak.

A breeze across her body surprised Kara enough to open her eyes, and there was Duke on his knees in front of her, looking at her sprawled body, just as the Duke behind her slid his palms over her nipples.

"Enjoying yourself?" His voice was a purr.

"Lil has some kinky fantasies," she said. *What the hell.* She held out her arms to him.

He came toward her, on his knees by her side, gloriously naked. Kara let herself touch him, finally touch him without holding back for fear he'd turn her away. She slid her palms along his chest, the hard ridges of his abdomen -- brushed against the hot tip of his cock.

Duke pressed his lips to hers and she stroked him as Duke behind her kneaded her breasts, teased her budding nipples. She moaned into his mouth, wrapping her arms around him. *Amazing how real this thing is.*

His kiss was drugging, the pleasure soft at first, then heating more as her lovers caressed her skin, a palm on her shoulder, a fingertip on her nipple, a quick nip on the sensitive spot under her ear.

Duke pressed his lips over her cheeks, her eyes, her forehead, breaking away to nibble on her jaw, her neck, her ear. Moving lower, he reached for her breasts, palmed them, lifted them, then blew on the hard pink tips before sucking one into his mouth. Moaning softly, Kara arched toward him, needing more. He sucked harder now, his other hand plucking her free nipple, drawing it into a hardened berry.

Behind her, Duke slid his hands along her belly, her thighs. Eagerly she parted her legs, let his exploring hands caress the sensitive skin of her inner thighs as Duke in front laved her other nipple with his tongue, sucked it into his mouth.

She felt herself creaming, felt gentle fingers part her, dance delicately over hot, swollen flesh.

"Delicious." Duke in front of her fed her another kiss before scooting lower and settling himself between her legs. "Let's see how this tastes."

Duke behind her reclaimed her breasts. In front of her, Duke lowered his head and inhaled deeply before parting her legs further and settling wide shoulders between them.

She felt a kiss at the very top where her pussy lips met, felt his thumbs part her, sucked in a breath in preparation -- and gasped at the delicate swirl of air dancing over her swelling clit.

“Like that, sweetheart?” The smile he gave her was pure male appreciation. She could only moan in return.

Taking that as a yes, he repeated it, blowing lightly on her clit, causing it to swell beyond the hood of skin that hid it. Then his tongue, just the tip of it, trailed a path along the inside of her labia, stroking up on one side, down on the other.

“Delicious,” he murmured again, and repeated the movement over and over, each thorough pass of his tongue stroking the side of her clit. Kara moaned, thrashing against his wide chest behind her, arching up from the pleasure of it.

Then he closed his lips around her pulsing clit. Sucked. She screamed from the pleasure of it, so hot, so potent, that any thought of the real Duke coming in and putting an end to it was banished as she writhed from the onslaught of his mouth on her.

Nips. Tiny licks. Long slow passes with a wet, gliding tongue. He drew out moans and screams as he pleased her pussy, laved her clit, sucking it with exquisite gentleness. When he inserted a finger inside her wetness she almost clamped her thighs around his head from the intensity of it. Warm rough palms curled around her knees, jerked her hips up, spread her legs above her torso. His tongue returned to lick delicately around her clit, driving her crazy.

“Come for me,” Kara heard a rough voice say in her ear. His finger pumped slowly inside her, his tongue firmer now, circling her clit, curling around it, laving it, licking faster, pumping faster and she clenched harder, the pleasure so intense she was shaking, bucking. “Come for me, sweetheart,” Duke whispered in her ear again.

She tensed, muscles coiling as Duke closed his mouth around her clit and sucked hard this time. Two fingers inside her now, pumping fast, and she couldn't breathe, couldn't speak, just moaned, thrashing her head from side to side on his rock-solid chest.

“You know...” that velvet voice in her ear only spurred her higher, “... the best part about eating pussy is fucking it after. So tight and wet.” The rough words made her spasm around the pumping fingers in her, Duke's mouth drawing harder on her

clit. "Just think how tight you'll be when I fuck you," Duke whispered, and she moaned again. "How creamy you'll be for me."

Cream for him she did. She froze, drew in a breath. Splintered, shuddering, screaming, pulsing. He kept her in place, used his mouth, his fingers, drawing her tighter, faster, hotter, then leaving her limp, breathless, boneless.

It took her a few minutes to even begin to think.

"This is insane." Kara barely managed even that, hearing her own heart thudding in her chest. "Remind me to thank the patent holder."

The grin Duke in front shot her was full of masculine satisfaction. She watched him rise, take his massive erection into his hand and knee her legs apart once more.

"Time for round two."

"I can't." Regretting it, Kara tried to scoot up. Duke could be back any minute and she didn't want to get caught. She found herself pressed against a strong male chest. His arms wrapped around her middle.

She tried to untangle herself.

Duke pushed her legs apart, his hands gentle yet firm. She frowned as she tried to squirm away. Even in VR he was a domineering asshole. At least in VR guilt wouldn't make her a dishrag. She pressed her hands to her face just as virtual Duke filled her, so deep, so perfect, she arched up, moaned as his cock stretched her.

Determination won. She tore the goggles off, only to stare up into Duke's eyes of hot, molten steel. She cursed, tried to wiggle away from him, but only succeeded in grinding her pelvis against him, her engorged clit brushing against his pelvic bone, shooting more sparks of pleasure through her.

She was on the bed. Naked. VStraps gone. When did he get her naked?

Before she could speak, he captured both her wrists, raised them level with her head, pinned her. Nipped gently at her mouth.

"I'll stop if you ask me," he rasped, intense eyes locked with hers. "Please don't ask me."

The pleasure inside her was molten. Wordlessly, Kara wrapped her legs around him, and he moved, slowly at first, teasing, then deeper, harder, stroking firmly, his thick cock caressing the slick folds of her cunt as he filled her completely, withdrew, filled her again. Pleasure she'd thought sated built again, winding from her clit along her spine, coiling over her, building taut.

He watched her face as he fucked her, his jaw clenched, his breathing ragged.

Unable to stand the intensity of his gaze, Kara closed her eyes and turned her head, at least keeping some of her defenses. Except, then he stopped.

She clenched around him, trying to force him deeper.

"Look at me." He pulled out, the head of his cock poised right at the entrance, teasing her swollen pussy.

As if of their own accord, her eyes opened. Locked with his. He stroked in again, stretched her with his cock, so slow, so exquisitely torturously slow, she lifted her hips, trying to urge him deeper.

"More?"

"Yes, damn you," she gasped.

Sharply, Duke plunged. Withdrew.

"Like this?" Another stroke, again hard.

"Yes!"

Large hands wrapped around her ankles, lifted them up, lined her legs together, and placed them against his right shoulder. He leaned in, trapped her knees between their bodies, stroked inside and the angle of it allowed him to go so deep, she gasped with it, feeling him tap her cervix.

Kara felt him shift, rise a bit, and he was on his feet, squatting, his thighs over her, pressing so deep, so hard, she screamed from it as he fucked her. Strong, full and merciless until she shuddered around him, screamed his name and splintered into another orgasm, the grunts of his own climax echoing in her ears.

She was still shuddering when thinking ability returned. Wet, sticky, she tried to unscramble what was left of her brain. The heavy arm gently curling around her was

yet another shock. She was tugged against him, his front spooning her back. Deliciously warm, her body refused to move even as her mind sharply ordered it to get the hell away.

“Sleep. You can yell at me later,” she heard him rumble in her ear. His breath tickled her ear. His skin was warm, damp. Duke’s cock -- still half hard -- pressed against her ass. His arm refused to let her budge.

Resigned, she closed her eyes. And slept.

Chapter Nine

Kara made herself eat, concentrating fiercely on shoving food into her mouth. *You can stay as long as you need me.* Conceited, arrogant prick with his mild voice and sudden manners. So coolly polite she wanted to smack him just to see if he'd jump.

It was his fault she needed him in the first place. If Duke hadn't pumped his blood into her, he wouldn't have to pump her... another way. Mentally she snorted. Even if he hadn't, she would still want him. Without the biological need, without the heightened sense of his body, she would still want him. She would just manage to keep her dignity and not beg for it.

She shoved soup in her mouth, more to keep herself occupied than from any real hunger.

I'm breaking the contract.

She was supposed to feel grateful. *Ha.*

He'd forgotten the bonus feature. Or he didn't know about it, and Lil hadn't told him. The addiction worked both ways if one of the participants was emotionally involved. It was something that had evolved on Terva to ensure success of the species when there were too few females for all the males.

After Orpheus, Duke had some of her DNA in him -- which explained why he didn't choke on his tongue from the toxin. He obviously wasn't addicted then. Or not enough to force him to seeking her out sooner.

With dark glee, Kara really hoped all the inventive sex would add to the addiction. Just a bit. Just enough so she could laugh and smirk and tell him to go to hell.

Bastard.

She ate, ignored Duke, stared at the stars and planned for the future. Her transPod was useless. She had to find something else before going back to work. And not think about him. Ever.

Dinah walked in, her hand engulfed by a large paw belonging to a tall military type. Probably Jack Brenner, commander of *GrimJustin*, who had been with Duke during the Kremlin stint, and he probably thought of her just as fondly. He didn't look so intense, grinning like an idiot at the woman next to him.

"I'm glad someone's happy," Duke grumbled beside her.

She agreed wholeheartedly.

Of course, they headed her way.

Hastily, Kara swallowed a spoonful of soup, wiping her mouth as Military-man extended a hand.

"Pilot Dillon."

She forced a smile. "Commander."

He nodded, his face a study of polite curiosity. She wondered what to make of it.

"Were you able to trace it?" Duke's voice was a study of nonchalance.

"Yeah." Dinah sighed now, the glow around her dimming just a bit. "Stops at... where you said. Nothing beyond it."

Clearly they were going to talk around her. Kara shoved in another spoonful and pretended not to give a shit.

Except Duke tensed. She wasn't sure how, but she could feel his muscles coiling.

"Thanks." His voice was calm, yet strange.

Dinah shot him a look, and tugged Military-man away.

Kara lifted her head, met with cool steel in Duke's gaze.

"I want you to know..." he kept his voice low, dangerously mild, "... I made the decision to break the contract before following up on the source of your mystery payment. You have guest quarters until you leave here. If you need a fuck, you know where to find me."

"I'm swooning with all this romance." Sarcasm dripped like honey. Inside, she was shaking. He'd fucked her as if starved for her. He'd held her afterward, refusing to let her budge. And still he wouldn't believe her. An insane urge to laugh fought with the sting of tears.

"Brenner thinks I'm in love with you." He shrugged those wide shoulders. "He could be right." Stunned, Kara stared at him.

As if speaking of the weather, Duke put more soup into his mouth, swallowed it.

"Could be that I have the same condition as you when you need me. Simple addiction to DNA." Again he shrugged. "Could be something else." Another spoonful. "Trouble is, I can't see myself with a lying slut."

She flinched at that, opened her mouth to protest, but nothing came out. The guilt, the loathing of her own weakness, churned her belly. The soup felt like molten lead in her stomach. "I don't know what else to say," she said finally, the ache in her gut spreading.

"You were paid nicely to fuck me for intel."

Kara dropped her spoon with a clang. "The money covered post-med costs. For my knees." She spoke quickly, needing to get it out before he stopped it. "I didn't know why they gave it to me. Didn't ask. I couldn't afford not to take it. I swear --"

"No more." His quiet voice cut her off. "Lil is working on a tonic that will decrease your need. When that's done, you're out at the nearest starPort."

She pressed a hand to her churning belly. Forgetting pride, she laid a trembling hand on his arm, and watched him still under her touch. "I have feelings for you."

Duke laughed bitterly. "You need me to fuck you. Even if I believed you, any feelings would be attributed to that."

"I don't know how to make you believe me."

He sighed, but made no move to disengage himself. "If you were in my place, would you?"

"I would try." She would be damned if she'd cry.

"I did. I did try." He shoved away from the table, towering over her. "I am breaking the contract. What else do you want?"

Now she laughed bitterly. "Nothing I can get, apparently." She stayed seated even as he left.

* * *

He needed to pummel something.

Duke tightened the wraps on his knuckles as he entered the gym. He stopped mid-stride as his gaze landed on Kara, sweaty, flushed, and obviously uncomfortable, witnessing a bitter argument in front of her. Brenner and Dinah, nose to nose. Pissed.

"I don't think you're an invalid." Brenner's voice was deliberately low. "But you do need to rest."

"I'm rested. I'm fucking rested!" In contrast, Dinah was almost screaming. "I'm so rested I'm ready to wipe the floor with your ass to show you!"

"Fine." Brenner clamped a hand on her arm, and dragged her toward the door.

"Let go of me, you big bastard!" Dinah was growling now, trying to wrench her arm free. In response, Brenner simply lifted her and slung her over his shoulder, ignoring the curses pouring over his head.

"Excuse us." With that, he strode out.

Duke shook his head. "Idiots. Both of them."

Then he focused on Kara. On the leg extensions.

"What the hell are you doing?"

She looked like she was biting her lips. He tried to keep himself from focusing on the desire to nibble on them himself.

"What the hell do you think?" Her voice was breathy, probably from the workout. The sound of it made his cock twitch.

"Weights aren't the best thing for your knees."

She shrugged, and her voice was bitter. "What, now you believe me?"

He forced back the urge to grab and shake her. "I believe you had an injury," he forced out between gritted teeth. "And it's not a good idea --"

"Save it." Kara wiped her forehead with the towel slung around her neck. "Not that it's your deal, but I've already cleared it with Lil."

"Great. Perfect." Duke almost turned away, but a sudden thought had him glaring back at her. "You can't get up, can you?"

Her eyes flickered. "I'm fine."

"Prove it."

"They're just a little stiff." Her face was carefully blank now.

"Stubborn idiot."

He plucked her from the seat, one arm under her shoulders, another under her knees. This time there was no head resting on his shoulder.

"I'm fine! Put me down."

"I'm taking you to Lil."

"I swear I'm going to kick your fucking ass if you don't put me down right now!"

He was at the door. He dropped her legs, wedging her between the door and his already bulging erection. Felt the dark satisfaction of seeing her cheeks flush deeper, her eyes widen.

"Go ahead. Kick my ass." He could smell her -- heat, musk, female.

Her hands fisted in his hair. Then she was kissing him, fusing her mouth with his, grinding her center against his aching cock.

Someone moaned.

Kara tore her mouth away, slapping a restraining hand against his chest. "No. Don't."

Duke rolled his hips against her, watched her eyelashes flutter. "You really want me to stop?"

"Let go of me."

Fighting the urge to simply take her, he set her on her feet carefully, ready to steady her if she staggered.

She stood military straight. "I can't do this. You either want me or you don't."

"You have doubts about that?" He caught her small palm in his hand, pressed it against his straining cock.

She snatched her hand away. "You're hot and then you're ice cold. I can't keep up."

"Sweetheart, let me show you hot." He wasn't in the mood for talking now.

"I said no, damn you!" Was there a glimmer of tears in her eyes? "You want me? You act like you despise me afterward. I can't handle it." She knocked away the hand he lifted to touch her face. "Don't. Just don't."

He sighed, then simply wrapped his arms around her stiffened body and dropped his forehead to rest on her head. "It's me I despise," he murmured. "Can't stay away from you. It won't stop." Despite his aching cock he didn't make a move to bring her closer. Instead he held still for a few precious moments, feeling the tension in her start drifting.

Kara sighed. "It's probably the same effect --"

Incoming beeped. Urgent.

"NeoSoviet on intercept." Trent's voice was clipped through the dataUnit. "Ygroza class."

Shit.

* * *

Duke paced the commandPost out of range of the screen.

Brenner -- cool, calm and polished -- dealt with Verkov. "I regret the lack of progress." His tone left no room for questions. "The toxin in Pilot Dillon is hazardous to the systems on this ship. As I am sure you accounted for."

On screen, Verkov leaned closer, his weak chin offset by a long meaty nose. "Which is why I arranged to meet you halfway. I imagine you want to get rid of her as fast as possible."

On the other side of Brenner, Trent typed furiously. A char message appeared on screen three. *Shuttle three was just accessed.*

Verkov had hacked into the *GrimJustin* through the shuttle? Fuck. An onsite check was required.

Trusting Brenner to handle it, Duke rushed to the shuttle dock. Station three was open; he jumped in just as the lights dimmed.

The hatch was blown. He gripped a handle, felt the grav slap him down before the speed and power of the shuttle took over.

Then there was space.

Chapter Ten

Kara sat in the pilot seat.

"*GrimJustin*, Pilot Dillon on Shuttle Three." Her voice was hoarse, as if she was forcing the words out. "I am returning to Alan Verkov's custody. Your transpo will be returned as soon as possible."

Duke considered possibilities, and settled on simple. "You want to tell me what the hell you're doing?"

Startled, she turned. Refused to look him in the eye. "I'm going to see Verkov."

Her old suit was back on -- she'd done something to put it back together, repairing the torn shoulder.

"You could have just asked."

"I didn't."

Slowly he inched forward, preparing to knock her out to regain control. "You make no sense."

"Yeah." She sounded resigned. "That's my biggest problem."

Incoming beeped. "*GrimJustin* shuttle. Prepare to be taken aboard."

Duke inched closer, calculated odds. "Why are you doing this?"

She looked at him now, her dark eyes sad and tired. "I fucked you up once. I won't have it happen again."

Somehow he thought that ache in his gut would leave when she admitted the truth. Instead, he felt empty.

"Confessing, sweetheart?" He fought to keep his voice calm.

Kara walked toward him, even as the shuttle jerked and moved under them. "I loved you." Her voice was empty, as if nothing was left. It somehow matched the cold feeling in his gut. "I loved you. When they had me... They crushed something. On my

legs. This man... told me to crawl... for the meds. And then he wouldn't administer them until I typed out your keySeq." She raised a palm to cut off whatever he was going to say. "I couldn't hold it. I'm sorry, I couldn't hold it. It was my fault. All of it."

Duke refused the dark haze of imagery she painted. "No." He shook his head, as if this would keep it away. "There's plenty of ways to extract intel from a woman. I don't see why --"

"Doesn't matter now." She gave him a small, empty smile. "Either way, they got what they needed."

"So what? This grand sacrifice is for me?"

"I fucked you up once," she repeated. "I won't have it again."

* * *

They were escorted to the primeCommander's office. Five guards with Katusha lasers showed them the way.

"Halloway Duke. A pleasure to finally meet you."

Verkov, all three chins of him, didn't make an attempt to rise. "Pilot Dillon. My apologies for any suffering you encountered at the Davidian science station."

Kara nodded, stayed silent. Cautious, Duke placed himself between the lasers and her back.

"You have once more provided exemplary service," Verkov continued, fat fingers moving over his tableUnit.

"You... I know you." Kara's posture changed.

Verkov answered with a beaming smile.

"You were on Orpheus. In the cell --"

"Of course. I was the one that saw your potential." Calmly, Verkov lifted his gaze and looked over her head at Duke. "And I was right. Once again you got me what I needed."

"Me." Duke kept his voice soft as pieces clicked together. "You wanted me."

Verkov chuckled. "Of course."

"Why?" The hoarse outraged whisper was from Kara.

Verkov closed the tableUnit and managed to raise his hefty bulk over the desk. "Your blood is a carrier. You can safely absorb substances other humans would die from."

"You infect me -- you get a weapon." Duke was starting to understand. All of it.

"Precisely." Verkov clapped his hands together.

"You were on Orpheus." Her voice hoarse, Kara repeated it, as if everything else he said didn't matter. "You tortured me."

"Theatrics aren't very becoming, dear." Verkov waved a fat hand as if dismissing the *theatrics*. "I needed information from you. You should be grateful. There are plenty of more... interesting ways to extract information."

"You used me." Her voice was but a whisper.

Duke wasn't sure where she was going with this. "Kara."

"You used me to get Duke. Twice."

"And you were a delight." Verkov's chins stretched into a fat-lipped smile. "You did beg charmingly as I recall."

Kara screamed as she lunged for him, screamed again as a laser beam hit her at the knee and she stumbled hard onto the floor. She struggled to get up.

Duke turned to face the business end of a Katusha.

"You are exactly the man I need." Verkov's voice kept the pleasant lilt. "I will quadruple whatever rates *GrimJustin* pays you."

"And if I don't accept your offer?" They needed a miracle to get the hell out of here.

"You'll be killed, of course. I will have the inconvenience of finding another weapon, but a carrier as charming as Kara won't have any problem seducing him." He smiled down at her, as if she was a favored pet.

"Like hell," she growled.

Verkov shrugged. "You won't be in a position to say no."

"I don't think so." As the pieces fell into place, Duke fought to keep his voice even when rage colored his vision. "You need that bond. She needs to be emotionally connected to infect. That's why you wanted me."

Again, those soft shoulders lifted. "RabbitFuck and other drugs will create a temporary bond. My scientists assure me it's possible."

Duke hissed out a breath. "If I concede, you will guarantee her safety?"

"Her safety is guaranteed either way." A fat hand made a move to pet the still-kneeling Kara on the head. At her growl, he thought better of it.

"I will negotiate only when she's back on *GrimJustin*." *His blood. His blood was infected.* He inched closer to Verkov's desk, tried to look for a large enough power source.

A shower of sparks momentarily distracted him. A quick glance told him Kara was kneeling over a powerPlug, shards of a sealVial in her hand. Verkov's yelp of panic was an arm's length away. Duke took the opportunity to plant a fist in the fat blob of his neck before lunging for his tableUnit -- anything that would blow.

"No!"

Kara's scream whipped his head up. Five Katushas were pointed at his head.

She threw something at the guards. Dark red liquid glittered as lasers shattered the vials.

Something exploded.

Through smoke, Duke heard the guards choking.

"You stupid idiot," Verkov wheezed. "I could have made you rich."

Duke watched in slow motion as fat fingers curled around a miniBlast, squeezed -- and dropped it as Kara's body slammed into Verkov, knocking his bulk back against a wallConsole. She jerked as the laser tore skin. Screamed. Went limp.

Growling, Duke leapt and tore Kara away from Verkov. One of the stronger guards pointed a Katusha at them, between loud gasps for air. Duke's foot in his face relieved him from choking. His comrades -- the ones unconscious on the floor -- broke his fall.

Dragging Kara to the wall, Duke grabbed the smooth round of vials under her arm. Blood. Ripping one open, he poured the contents into Verkov's gaping mouth.

"Fuck yourself, you filthy bastard," he muttered, and took a precious second to watch those bejeweled hands clawing under fleshy chins. To the right of the chins was escape. Duke smashed his fist through the power grid on the wallConsole, poured the last three vials into it. No reaction.

Holding Kara up between the wall and his body, he gripped a shard left from the vial. Inhaled. He slashed diagonally across his palm, and fisted his hand through pain as blood drops plopped merrily into the vault. Then, as the ship starting shaking, he lifted her lifeless body and ran.

The shuttle was close. Alarms screeched in his ears. He ignored the masses of people who rushed to emergency stations. The ship shuddered underfoot.

Kara stirred over his shoulder. "What the fuck happened?"

Duke shoved down relief and concentrated simply on running. "We're getting out!" he yelled back.

The shuttle was open. He deposited her into a coPilot chair before securing the door. Upon returning, he found her sitting by the console, keying in commands, her side and arm raw and bleeding.

"Get an emergency pack," he snapped at her.

"We need to blow the hatch," she yelled, ignoring him.

"Everything's down. Go through it."

"Are you fucking kidding me?"

"Do I look like I'm in the mood?"

She threw him a quick glance. Punched it. The shuttle burst through the defenseless hatch, metal groaning as it ripped.

They were free.

Chapter Eleven

"You saved my life."

Duke hadn't said much since they were back aboard *GrimJustin*, just loomed over her as Lil stitched both of them up. As soon as the scanner had beeped a clean bill of health, he'd dragged her to his quarters.

"Yeah, well." Kara shrugged, but the slight prick of pain that accompanied the motion made her wince.

"Pain?"

"A little." Nothing compared to what she would feel when he dropped her off at the nearest starPort and kissed the whole mess goodbye.

"Lil didn't give you anything? Damn it, I told her..."

"It's fine. I feel fine." She moved her arm experimentally, noting the numbness was easing from the muscle. "Just edgy. She gave me as much as she could. I barely feel anything."

"Edgy?"

She smiled a little. "Too much excitement in one day."

Duke lifted an eyebrow. "I'll show you excitement."

Before she could scream, she was lifted and carefully laid across the bed, face down, legs dangling to the floor.

"What the hell are you doing?" She squirmed, twisted, trying to see his face.

"I'm giving you the assfucking I promised you."

Even though something liquid pooled at her belly, she was outraged. "I saved your worthless ass!"

He stroked a hand over her rear after unzipping and discarding her pants.

"You did. And I'm very grateful."

Duke probed gently between her buttocks, slid lower. Kara felt his finger brush over the sensitive folds of her labia, just a caress, a tease. She would have struggled if a heavy hand on her back hadn't restrained her. Well, she would have struggled a little.

"I also remember you stealing the shuttle in the first place, which landed you in the position to save my worthless ass."

She twisted her head to see him looming over her, big, broad and dangerous. "And if I hadn't, you would have been blown into tiny pieces."

"Hmm." His finger probed against the tender bud of her anal opening. "Speaking of tiny."

She heard him rummage in a drawer next to his bed, heard something pop. Then cool liquid dribbled on her backside, his hands spreading it over her skin as they spread her cheeks, massaging it into her skin, over her crease. Nothing else, just smooth massaging motions, over and over, until she was hot for him, hot and ready, and a little scared.

"Are you wet?"

She wasn't going to answer.

A slick finger probed between her pussy lips and slid into her soaked opening. Withdrew to circle her already pulsating clit.

"I think you are." Duke's chuckle was positively evil. A hot and clever finger penetrated her ass, withdrew to plunge again. Dark, burning and delicious.

Then he whispered, "You okay, sweetheart?"

She swallowed. "Yeah. I'm fine."

"Do you want me to stop?"

She took in a long breath. "No."

"Good."

His thumb alternated between her swollen clit and her dripping opening.

"I'm going to make you come," he rumbled above her. "You'll come with my cock in your ass."

Kara squirmed, but that only lodged his finger deeper. When another joined it, she tensed, moaned, not sure if it was pleasure or pain.

A stroke at her clit assured her it was pleasure.

Then his fingers withdrew. He cupped her ass cheeks. Spread them once more. And the tip of his cock, hot and moist, pressed against her burning anus.

Huge. Huge and impossibly hard, burning, he filled her, millimeter by aching millimeter, the pain-pleasure of it so intense she could do nothing but breathe. Then slowly he pulled out and sparks popped gooseflesh over her skin.

Again, tortuously slow in, his labored breathing harsh.

Duke's thumb found her clit again, rubbed at it as he pulled out, the pleasure so extreme she screamed from it.

He stopped. "Feel good, sweetheart?"

He was halfway inside her, not moving. Kara wanted more. She wiggled her hips and tried to lift her ass to take in more of him. Then moaned when he slapped her butt lightly. "You're injured. Stay still."

"More, damn you."

He fingered her clit, inched himself deeper inside. "Like this?"

Pleasure furler tighter. She clenched around him. "Harder."

He chuckled. "Don't worry, sweetheart. I'll take good care of you."

Another plunge, rougher this time, but good, so good the dark pleasure of it sent sparks along her spine.

Duke stopped again. "Feel good?"

"Yes." She was panting now, orgasm winding. "More."

"Of course." He thumbed her clit but didn't move his hips. "Just tell me something."

She barely had any breath left before she exploded. "What!" She'd tell him anything if he'd just fuck her. Now.

"Tell me you love me."

She froze.

A large hand caressed her buttocks gently, the thumb of his other hand weaving lazy circles around her straining clit. His hips were motionless.

"Tell me you love me."

"Just fuck me."

The circling around her clit increased, and he gave one slow stroke before stopping again.

"Maybe I didn't do it right." He left her clit for a moment to tease her opening. "I love you, Kara. I love you so much it hurts. Now will you tell me?"

The breath exploded out of her. She wanted to turn, to look at him, but he moved his hand, pressing down between her shoulder blades. She was so close, she wanted to look at him, but she was close --

"I love you too, you bastard," she growled. "Now fuck me!"

"Yes, ma'am." He stroked back in, pulled out. In again.

Kara screamed. Splintered. Convulsed around him as he emptied himself inside her. She didn't move as he got up, placed something cool and soothing between her legs, gently cleaning her.

Finally he turned her around.

"You meant that?" She searched his eyes as his arms wrapped around her.

"Yeah."

She nodded. "I'm sorry... about --"

Duke shook his head. "Me too." Then she was on his lap -- hugged so tight she yelped at the pressure on her healing ribs.

Immediately, his hold eased. "God, I'm sorry."

"I don't break easy."

"No. For all of it. Because of me... all of it." He traced kisses on her lips, her eyelids. Then his hand slid over her knees, gently, reverently. "I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry."

"Just stop."

He lifted his eyes to hers. "If you never want to see me again, I'll understand."

She felt the hurt of it, rolled her eyes instead. "You fuck me blind, you tell me you love me and then send me away? What kind of fucked-up bullshit is this?"

His lips firmed. "I just said --"

"I get it. You're sorry. How the fuck do you think I feel? I didn't hold out."

"Who the fuck expected you to?" He was right at her face now, yelling back. "You aren't military. You're not trained for it. With Dinah, Brenner and I had to --"

Duke broke off. Again she was enveloped in his arms, cradled. His lips found hers, brushed the gentlest of kisses. "Stay with me. Here."

"What about --"

"Just stay." His voice was hoarse.

Kara nodded and rested her head against his shoulder. "Okay." She took in a long deep breath. Found peace. "So what did you and Brenner do with Dinah?"

Fiona Jayde

Fiona Jayde is an author, a pilot, a ninth degree black belt in three styles of martial arts, a computer hacker, a mountain climber, a jazz singer, a weight lifter, a superspy with a talent for languages, and an evil genius. All in her own head, of course.

In real life, she really is an author, insists she is a good driver even though various loved ones refuse to let her drive, possesses a brown belt in Tae Kwon Do and a blue belt in Aikido, is a web developer and scared to death of heights, loves jazz piano, can bench-press about twenty pounds -- with effort, speaks English and Russian fluently, and when not plotting murder and mayhem enjoys steamy romance novels, sexy spy thrillers, murky mysteries and violent movies where things frequently blow up.